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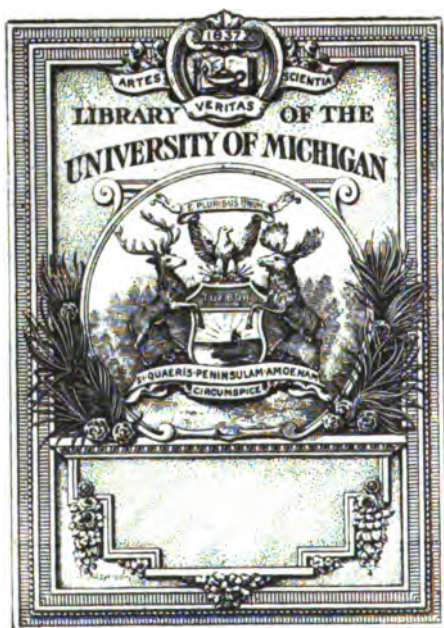
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LONDON SOCIETY

A Monthly Magazine

OF

LIGHT AND AMUSING LITERATURE

FOR

THE HOURS OF RELAXATION.

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CONTENTS OF VOL. LXXII.

Forbidden. By HELEN F. HETHERINGTON.	PAGE
Chapters XXI to XLIII 1, 113, 225, 337, 449,	561
Unto this End. By MRS. AMY WOOD	18
A Stupid Couple. By RICHARD WARFIELD	41
A Daughter of Babylon. By C. HORNBY	49, 158
Early Days of Carmen Sylva. By SARAH CATHERINE BUDD	64
Nurse Hyde's Experiences. By J. BARRETT-KNOX	79
The House of the Welf. By HECTOR H. MUNRO	86
The Pilgrim's Quest. By G. HUBI NEWCOMBE	90
Damocles, or the Gates of Janus. By THEODORA CORRIE.	
Chapters VI to XVI 91, 199, 317, 425, 537,	647
Broken Toys	103
The City Treasurer's Holiday. By FREDERICK DUNKLEY	104
The Last Confession. By GERALD HAYWARD	109
A Sketch in Sombre Colors. By JESSIE E. ENGLISH	110
The Evolution of Nihilism. By A. M. JUDD	130
Father's Paragon. By Miss CHRISTIANSEN	137
Crossing the Rubicon. By H. B. NEDHAM	148
To a Friend. By GERALD HAYWARD	185
Jubilee Stamp Quest of Abner Keggs. By HALBORO DENHAM	186
Boatman Jack. By G. HUBI NEWCOMBE	218
The Ideal House. By JOHN STRANGE WINTER	219, 579
The Drama	224, 667
Wolf-Madness. By A. M. JUDD	242
Adventures of a Novel. By GEORGE LAMBERT	259
In a Cheval Glass. By C. W. HAWKSFORD	272
Some Sheridans. By ARCHIBALD COWIE	286
Lady Hop-Pickers at Selborne. By SARAH CATHERINE BUDD	299
Who Harkens? Translated by BARONESS SWIFT	316
A Question of the Hour. By H. B. NEDHAM	356
Where the Peewits Cry. By VERNER FENTON	367
A Hidden Talent. By JANET A. McCULLOCK	390
A Bunch of Forget-me-nots. By W. ALF. ALLAN	396

	PAGE
Our Girls and their Amusements. By ALICE CLARKE WHITE	403
Smut. By GERALD HAYWARD	410
Sir Isaac Holden. By SARAH CATHERINE BUDD	421
Who Gave the Warning? By WALTER RICHARDS	466
Nell. By GERALD HAYWARD	480
Chulalongkorn and the Siamese. By S. E. SAVILLE	482
Paid in Full. By EVELYN E. BOGLE	488, 620
A House of Cards. By CATHARINE SYLVESTER	507
Life's Fitful Fever. By M. HANSARD	519
The Forgotten Art of Conversation. By A. CLARKE WHITE	531
The Origin of Servants' Liveries. By A. GORDON	556
George Wilson, M.D. By HORACE WYNDHAM	584
In the Hour of Death. By WINSTON KENDRICK	596
Signs and Cognisances	616
Handwriting and Character as Revealed Thereby. By RICHARD DIMSDALE STOCKER	643
Chime on, Sweet Bells. By G. HUBI NEWCOMBE	666

LONDON SOCIETY.

JULY, 1897.

“Forbidden.”

By HELEN F. HETHERINGTON,

Part Author of “PAUL NUGENT, MATERIALIST,” “NO COMPROMISE,”
“LED ON,” etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXI.

LADY MALVERN ON THE ALERT.

“Your niece is the most interesting psychological study I ever came across,” Townshend-Rivers remarked in his languid way as he lounged against the wall—dropping his observation over the much be-frizzled grey wig of his hostess as she sat on a settee close by him. “There are such infinite potentialities in her future, the Church behind her in the shape of the talented Bishop—and the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, tacked on to her by way of a husband. Will it be a tragedy or a comedy?”

“Neither, but a mixture of both—probably a melodrama.”

“Or a French play; we have all the *dramatis personæ* ready to hand; only three are necessary—the husband, the wife, the friend.”

“You are wrong. That is only the most ordinary plot of the everyday French novel, or the English one if you like it; but neither Beatrice nor Captain Pemberton would act up to it,” she said with decision.

“Excuse me, the situation is absolutely working itself out at the present moment. There is Pemberton doing the despairing lover to the life, leaning against the wall, as lovers always do in real life or in books, and staring with all his eyes at Lady Falconer, who makes play with the newly-arrived Talbot. There is Falconer on the other side of the room glaring at Pemberton, as if he would like to eat him, but restrained from indulging his appetite because of a hint from you——”

"Stop, stop—I won't have it," laughing in spite of her annoyance. "Go and get a partner instead of making up scandals like a set of magic-lantern slides."

Ethelred Hall had opened its wide doors to admit the youth of the neighbourhood. There were healthy-looking girls who had been devoting the day to following the hounds, and now were exercising their energies in the activities of waltz and gallop, or *pas-de-quatre*. There were sunburnt young Squires, who felt arrogant enough in the saddle, but meek as Moses in the ball-room, who went on with their hunting talk whenever their partners stopped for want of breath, as if they had no other idea left in their heads.

"A glorious spin, Miss Worship, seventeen miles without a check—you would have enjoyed it down to the ground."

"Perhaps I should, Mr. Ward—literally, not metaphorically," the girl answered with a cheerful laugh.

Such scraps of conversation caught Beatrice's ear on every side, and made her regret that she was leaving a hunting county without ever having been to a meet, or even seen a pack of hounds.

"You can't do everything, you know," Talbot said consolingly. "There are plenty of women to hunt, shoot, gamble, without you."

"You talk as if I were an old woman, condemned to sit in a reserved seat whilst others played," she said with an amused smile.

"And if I do, there's nothing so comfortable as a reserved seat—not a solitary one, you know."

"But I don't want to be only a looker-on. My idea of life is to live in the midst of it."

"You would not like to be a private fighting because he's told to fight, and dying without being missed."

"But everybody is sure to be missed by somebody," she objected. "Mary Jane would break her heart for Tommy Atkins."

"Yes, but somebody might be missed by everybody—an empty reserved seat for instance makes a mark that is widely noticed. Let the men work as hard as they like, but, for Heaven's sake, keep the women out of the noise, and the vulgar scrimmage."

"You speak feelingly, as if you had a wife in the midst of the scrimmage," she said, amused at the unusual warmth of his tone.

"I have a sister, and that's quite bad enough," he answered with a groan. "Her craze is shoeblacks, and she can't pass one in the

street without rushing up to him, and asking him if he knows the catechism, or if he is living up to an ideal—that's the phrase."

"I don't pity you much—it might be worse."

"You may tell a man with small-pox that he might have the plague and die in half an hour, but it won't make his spots a bit less unpleasant. And as to my sister—you don't know the worst. All her friends have hobbies, and directly I set foot in London they try to drag me into them," looking very much aggrieved.

"But no man objects to being run after," she said mischievously, whilst her eyes wandered round the room to where Pemberton was standing, and she wondered why he looked so grave.

"Not if he were pelted with bills on 'Woman's Rights and Woman's Wrongs,' and Heaven knows what else! It's enough to make the bravest sneak off round the first corner."

"When I am in a strait, I won't choose you for my champion, Mr. Talbot," gazing over the edge of her fan at Hugh's serious countenance, and asking the reason of it with uplifted eyebrows.

"Lady Falconer, what have I done?" in real or pretended dismay.

"I don't know, but it is evident what you would do—sneak off," and she laughed, a low, rippling laugh which was very good to hear, as he protested indignantly.

Lord Falconer, as the laugh caught his ear, turned round and looked at his wife. There was not another woman to compare to her in style or fascination, and very few in beauty. When she smiled and her glorious eyes lighted up, whilst her red lips took the sweetest curve, she was perfectly irresistible. She was turning Talbot's head without the smallest effort—and every man in the room was wild to dance with her. Only yesterday morning, he would have felt proud of her success—but to-day, she seemed no longer to belong to him. If he caught her eye, she looked away, and for a few moments her brightness vanished; when her dress brushed him as she went by in a waltz she did not seem to know it, and in every way she evidently wished to show that she did not recognise his presence. A bitter feeling of loss was upon him—it might not last—but it was very strong all through that long evening. Any other man could go up to her and ask her to dance—except himself.

"Beatrice has made a *succès fou*," Millie Crosby ventured to



would be disastrous. From the safest man of her acquaintance, he would develop into the most dangerous, and the situation would become quite too oppressively interesting. Her experience was so vast that she knew every point of the game, and she could easily gauge the danger without exaggerating it. Falconer had slipped out of the room, probably for a surreptitious little gamble with anyone who would help him, and she was thankful for his absence. If he had been there, she felt that she must have stopped the waltz by a quiet message to the musicians; but now she let it go on and waited for the issue. To her impatience it seemed as if it would never end. One pair of dancers, and then another, dropped off, and several came up to bid her good-bye, with a heap of conventional phrases, but still Hugh's fair head went round the room in close proximity to Beatrice's brown one, and the music grew sadder and faster, as if working itself up into a paroxysm of pain and passion. Hugh felt as if it had got into his brain and fevered it, until he was incapable of thought or reflection, and only penetrated through and through with a wild and unreasoning delight such as he had never been blessed with before. But when the last notes died away in a mournful sigh, the spell was broken, and as they both leaned against the wall, she being giddy, and he feeling unsteady in the region of his emotions, he pulled himself together resolutely.

"Wasn't it delicious, Hugh?" she said breathlessly. "And don't our steps go well together?"

"They always did, and always will," slowly, with his eyes fixed on her face, because he dared not trust them to look upon her face.

Lady Malvern came up and ordered her niece off to bed, but Mr. Talbot followed in her wake and entreated for another turn. Beatrice yielded with a willingness that charmed him completely, for he never guessed that she would have been ready to dance with a chair or a stick, if by that means she could have staved off by half an hour the dreaded time of going to bed, and lying awake with distracting thoughts for her bed-fellow. He put it down to the account of his own fascinations, as he did many other things which sprang from quite a different cause, and so gained a happy assurance of manner which is of the greatest use in society.

remark as she came up to him, looking like a dainty dabchick approaching a clumsy blackbird.

"Does that mean in plain English that success has turned her head?" he said unpleasantly.

"Not at all—she maddens others, but remains sane herself. Nobody but a husband would have asked such a question."

"Husbands get left out in the cold. Where is yours?" he asked abruptly.

"Not at all in the cold," she said composedly. "Being grilled, I believe, in Jamaica."

"I wish I were with him—anywhere but here."

"That is so civil of you," sweetly. "Is this the result of matrimony?"

"D—— matrimony," he said fiercely.

"I'm not your wife, so you needn't swear."

"I beg your pardon," with some slight confusion, "but I've been rubbed the wrong way all day."

"And when people rub too hard the veneer of civilization breaks off, and the brute comes out. In your case it was demonstrated by a pocket-handkerchief," she said mischievously.

"I don't understand you," he answered with a frown which showed that he did.

"Hugh, may I have the pleasure?"

Captain Pemberton found Lady Falconer bowing before him as if their parts were reversed. She laughed as she caught his astonished eye. "I want to dance with you, and you won't ask me. See what I'm reduced to!"

Without a word he put his arm round her waist, and whirled her off to the soft tones of "After the ball is over." He resolved not to stop as long as the music went on, for he might never have such a chance as this again, he told himself. Fast went the music, and fast their feet in perfect unison, but faster still his heart, which throbbed as if it would burst with the intoxication of his hidden love.

Lady Malvern put up her lorgnette and eyed them curiously. She saw that Pemberton had been roused at length from his rôle of passive indifference. There was a look of extreme tension on his face, as if his passions had been stirred to their depths. They were kept down at present by the man's natural powers of self-control, but if that control yielded to overwhelming pressure the result

would be disastrous. From the safest man of her acquaintance, he would develop into the most dangerous, and the situation would become quite too oppressively interesting. Her experience was so vast that she knew every point of the game, and she could easily gauge the danger without exaggerating it. Falconer had slipped out of the room, probably for a surreptitious little gamble with anyone who would help him, and she was thankful for his absence. If he had been there, she felt that she must have stopped the waltz by a quiet message to the musicians; but now she let it go on and waited for the issue. To her impatience it seemed as if it would never end. One pair of dancers, and then another, dropped off, and several came up to bid her good-bye, with a heap of conventional phrases, but still Hugh's fair head went round the room in close proximity to Beatrice's brown one, and the music grew sadder and faster, as if working itself up into a paroxysm of pain and passion. Hugh felt as if it had got into his brain and fevered it, until he was incapable of thought or reflection, and only penetrated through and through with a wild and unreasoning delight such as he had never been blessed with before. But when the last notes died away in a mournful sigh, the spell was broken, and as they both leaned against the wall, she being giddy, and he feeling unsteady in the region of his emotions, he pulled himself together resolutely.

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CHAPTER XXII.

BREAKING UP.

THERE was a general break up of the party at Etheldred Hall the next day, and fresh arrivals were expected from all directions. Lady Crosby remarked that nothing made her feel so insignificant as to turn out of her rooms in a friend's house, and know that somebody else was coming to fill them up directly her back was turned. She was hurrying back to her charming house in Pont Street, having received a telegram to the effect that her husband had already arrived at Liverpool. This had upset the plans which she and the Major had concocted together of meeting at various country-houses; but he was looking forward to some capital shooting, so he bore the disappointment with an amount of resignation most trying to Millie's vanity.

Lady Malvern was very sorry to part with her niece, more sorry than she could have imagined possible. If she had not given her solemn word of honour to Falconer that his wife should start that day for St. Christopher's, she would have kept her with her as long as she herself stayed in Warwickshire.

She sat in a large arm-chair by the fire in her private sitting-room, wrapped in an embroidered negligée of black satin and pink brocade. Her grey hair was elaborately dressed, and at the top of the curls there was a scrap of Honiton lace with a coquettish pink butterfly-bow at the side. She had been looking over her stable-accounts, but as Beatrice came in, she pushed them aside, with a pettish "They mean to ruin me. I can see that, but there's no use I suppose in making a fuss. Well, my dear," she went on, as she put up her face to be kissed. "If you can only say that you've an inch of headache or the tiniest tickle of a sore throat, I shall keep you here, whatever Falconer says."

But Beatrice in her frank honesty declined to get up any convenient ailment, so the old lady was obliged to let her go. She gave her much advice about her husband, both good and bad, and with admirable discretion said nothing about Captain Pemberton. She looked at her rather wistfully when they bade good-bye in the hall after a hurried luncheon, and putting a sapphire ring on one of her slender fingers, told her not to forget that there was an old

woman who would be very glad to see her when she was tired of everyone else.

"I shan't wait till then," Beatrice said warmly, as she gave her a forcible proof of affection on both withered cheeks.

Lady Malvern felt low when she returned into the now empty drawing-room. She recognised as a fact that she had never been quite so fond of anything living as she was of Beatrice, except of course of Diavolo, that celebrated racer, the star of her stables, who had won her the Blue Ribbon of the Turf—was it twenty or thirty years ago?

Whilst Millie Crosby, Townshend-Rivers, Lady Falconer, Hugh Pemberton and Geoffrey Talbot, were being seen off at the station by Major Mortimer, who was going down instead of up the line, whilst they all were laughing and chaffing as if not one of them had ever known anything of the seamy side of life—Horatia, Marchioness of Malvern, sat in her splendid drawing-room with the ghosts of the past for her only companions. That young thing, the bride of a few months standing, had made her feel quite old. Beatrice was so young in the ways of the world, so innocent in all her dealings, so frank as to her real sentiments, whilst Millie Crosby, though only three and twenty, was already old in the wisdom of the world. She knew how to smile when she meant to frown, she knew how to kiss when she wished to bite, and she could look as innocent as a baby when she was plotting the deepest mischief. She would try to break as many hearts as she could to please her craving vanity; but she would never break her own because nature had made it of the toughest material; whilst Beatrice's only deception would be in keeping a brave front to society, whilst her heart was wearing to its last shred in the bitterness of silent pain.

"Poor child, I will help her all I can," the old lady said with a sigh, and then to cheer herself up she wrote a lengthy letter to her trainer, and thought of her horses, instead of her relations.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A PEACEFUL HOME.

THE palace of St. Christopher's had never belonged to a Bishop before, so that there was nothing distinctively ecclesiastical about it. A lay-man who loved his church and was not ashamed to own it, had

bequeathed his home and all the land belonging to it to the diocese ; and Edward Kennard being the next occupant of the See, was the first to benefit by it. St. Christopher's Lodge lay on the side of a hill about two miles from the town, and from the lawn in front of the drawing-room windows there was a fine view of the Cathedral, which was the delight of the Bishop's heart. The house was old enough to look picturesque, with ivy creeping up the sides of the heavily mullioned windows, and substantial enough to defy the ravages of time. It had an air about it of comfort and dignity—two qualities which are rarely combined ; and Beatrice felt as if she had stepped into quite a different atmosphere, as Martin drew aside a crimson curtain with black fleur-de-lys on it, and the rustling of her silken skirts seemed to make a positive outcry in the silence of a well-ordered house. The next moment she was hugging her father with all her might, whilst Aunt Judy—a slight fragile figure in grey with a snow-white cap—was hovering on the threshold of the drawing-room with itching arms outstretched to her darling.

Peace was the prevailing attribute of life in St. Christopher's Lodge, and peace settled down gently as a dove on Beatrice Falconer's troubled heart. Very few questions were asked about her husband. He was a most unpleasant subject, so they let him be. It seemed a very natural proceeding for him to go and look after his own property whilst his wife paid her long promised visit to her father ; and neither the Bishop nor his sister had the slightest idea of the way in which he meant to enjoy himself. Lord Falconer had invited the Sartorises, and Nina was half wild with delight. She had never been asked to such a grand house as "The Grange" in all the course of her Bohemian life, and she determined that her frocks and her chiffons generally should be up to the highest mark. Joyfully she ran about from dressmaker to milliner, ordering frocks and hats which were "too sweet for words," till her red head was nearly turned as she gloated over the wonderful effect that she would produce in them. But alas ! the frocks came, the hats dropped in, and as the band-boxes stood in the Hall, Jack Sartoris followed close after them, with a very grave expression on his honest ugly face. By the merest chance it had come to his ears that Falconer was keeping bachelor-house at "The Grange," and he hurried to St. John's Wood to tell his wife that she must stay at home. Of course there was a storm.

"It's quite too absurd," she cried with an angry sob. "Where would be the harm if you were there? A husband is as good as any watch-dog."

"Would he have asked any woman of his own rank in life under the same circumstances?"

"No, because he would have found them deadly slow, and he wouldn't have liked one of them half as much as me," she said with the audacity that she revelled in.

"If you say much more, he shall never come inside the house again," he growled fiercely, as he tapped his empty pipe on the table.

"Then I should meet him outside, which would be just as nice. But, Jack, you couldn't mean it," changing her tone to a wheedling one as she knelt down by his side.

"Not mean it? Great Scott! I'd see him hanged before I'd let you go."

Then followed a scene at high pressure. Nina, beside herself with rage, and disappointed vanity, dragged one gay frock after another out of its careful coverings, and spread them before her husband's disgusted eyes to show him what opportunities would be wasted of displaying her charms to the best advantage. Bills, bills, bills, those were the only things he thought of as the lamplight fell on grass-green satin and iridescent jet—or a tawny-coloured velveteen, which he mistook for silk-velvet. Then a hat with nodding scarlet plumes was almost shaken in his face, as she screamed in a high falsetto "Oh I'll pay you out for this, you wretch, you selfish monster!"

"Pay for this finery," he said drily, "for I'm dashed if I can or will."

"I shall go, and I *will* go, and you can't prevent me," she cried with a flaming face.

Jack Sartoris got up quietly from his chair and looked her straight in the face. "Go," he said quietly, "but never come back."

He went into the studio, and locked the door behind him. Nina stayed; but she never forgave him. As he went off alone in his cab to the station, she watched him go, and all the love she had ever borne him turned into a bitter hatred.

In spite of Nina's absence, Falconer managed to enjoy himself after his own fashion. He surrounded himself with a set of people who were singularly free from scruples and prejudices. The neigh-

bourhood did not trouble them much, the church never saw one of them, the "County" thought they would wait to call until Lady Falconer came to the "Grange." Reports of wild doings reached a few of the Society papers, but the charitable hoped that they were exaggerated, and the uncharitable said "it was just what they expected of a Clifford."

Meanwhile, Beatrice was happy at the Lodge, with nothing to mar the peaceful tenor of her days. Her father had to hold confirmations here, there and everywhere, and was consequently often away from home; but Miss Kennard was as constant to the home-fireside as any vestal Virgin to the sacred altar, and the aunt and niece were never dull when left together. As Woodlands—the Wentworths' country seat—was only a mile and a half away, Flora Vivian often popped in, looking as brimful of fun and mischief as ever. The girls enjoyed long chats over Beatrice's "doings in the great world," as Flo called them; but she never suspected that the intense bitterness of the half that was left out quite swamped the delightfulness of the half that was left in. Beatrice was at once too proud and too loyal to confide her wifely grievances to her cousin, but she thoroughly enjoyed her lively company. She tried to forget her sorrows as well as her fears whilst they sat together in the pleasant morning-room, where the sun came straight through the wide window whenever it had a chance, and tried to put out its rival—the fire.

She was highly amused at Flo's bearing towards the chaplain. Mr. Carrington was always perfectly imperturbable. Flo, out of pure mischief, tried to get him to flirt with her, but he was as unresponsive as a stone wall. He wrapped himself in his gravity, as in a cloak which was never unbuttoned, and never relaxed under the hottest fire of chaff. Sometimes the girls caught a twinkle in his eye, but he pursed up his lips all the tighter, and refused to smile. However, he could talk pleasantly on graver subjects, which was a pleasure to Beatrice, who had endured a surfeit of frivolity; and he took a deep interest in some of the more important questions of the day.

The day after Beatrice's arrival the Bishop took her to see the Cathedral—that beautiful monument of bygone piety, standing through succeeding ages, a splendid witness to Christianity, on the ground watered by a martyr's blood. Massive enough to defy the

wildest hurricane that ever blew—vast enough to offer shelter for the whole population of the county—it stands amid the homes of sin and sorrow and sadness, the haunts of pleasure and of trade, offering rest for the weary mind, consolation for the mourner, and for the sick—the life-giving prayer of faith. The pettiness of worldly interests had never been so apparent to Beatrice as when she stood in that long nave, and looked up at the lofty arches so wondrously far above her head. She felt as if she were the very most insignificant being on the face of the earth, with the massive grandeur of those Saxon pillars round her, as she listened to the silence that spoke—spoke of prayer and Eucharistic sacrifice carried on through half-forgotten centuries, whilst kingdoms rose and fell, and peoples struggled upward from the darkness of serfdom and superstition, into the light of freedom and faith.

After matins the Bishop led her into the transept, and showed her the beautiful screen which stands in its cold white purity, and its marvel of delicate carving behind the high altar. She did not say much, but as she looked at that army of saints, each in his or her appointed niche of lace-like tracery, the beauty of the work and the conception entered into her very soul.

“Oh, if I could only do some great thing for the glory of God, I should feel as if my life hadn’t been quite wasted,” she exclaimed, almost involuntarily, looking back at the cathedral as they walked to the carriage.

“You have the opportunity before you, if you choose to take it,” her father said, quietly.

“How, Daddie? I don’t see it. Even if I wished to (which I don’t), I couldn’t give up everything for the sake of slumming.”

“You needn’t. Do your duty in your own sphere of life—that is your task. Society is growing fearfully lax as to its morals. By the careful control of your manners and conversation, by the purity of your life and of your home, you can preach a sermon which won’t bore anybody, and which many will listen to. There, child, don’t imagine that you haven’t any work to do, even amongst your pleasures,” he added, with a smile.

“It isn’t in me to be an example,” she said, with raised eyebrows, as if she had been studying herself and seeing nothing to satisfy her. “I can be awfully good here, but when I get amongst the usual set, you know, I’m just as bad as any of them.”

"And it is just then that you must remember that life isn't a game of play," he said, gravely. And then he turned the subject, and told her the Archdeacon's wife, Mrs. Winthrop, was coming to call on her.

"Is she nice?"

"I will leave you to judge," with a decided twinkle in his eye. "But for Heaven's sake, don't shock her."

"I shall, if she's on the look-out for it. I always do," she said, veraciously. "And now for some shopping."

CHAPTER XXIV.

SPARRING WITH THE ARCHDEACON'S WIFE.

A FEW days later the Archdeacon's wife arrayed herself with great precision in her Sunday garment of brown silk trimmed with gold braid, a brown bonnet with a yellow feather, and a row of gilt buttons round the brim, and an old-fashioned seal-skin of uncertain shape which reeked of the camphor and Keating's powder, in which it had been embalmed all the summer. And then she stepped into a capacious brougham, and ordered the coachman in an important tone to drive to "The Palace."

It was only natural that there should be a little sparring between the Bishop's daughter and the Archdeacon's wife. So long as there was no episcopal palace in the neighbourhood, the Ven. William Winthrop considered himself the most important person not only in the cathedral but in the town of St. Christopher's. But when the Bishop arrived on the scene, he forthwith retrograded from a first-class to a second-class dignitary—a descent which his wife took to heart far more than he did himself. He welcomed the Bishop with frank cordiality, and talked of the benefit which his presence would confer on the Church; but his wife gnashed her teeth over it in private, though she discussed it with an urbane smile in public.

As she drove to St. Christopher's Lodge she consoled herself with the thought that Beatrice was a peeress. Naturally a peeress would take precedence of a Mrs. Winthrop, so really there was nothing to make a fuss about.

She took little notice of the old lady sitting by the fire, because she had seen her before; but her curious eyes absolutely devoured

Lady Falconer—the London beauty, the fashionable worldling. If she gave herself airs she meant to be down upon her at once, and to tell her that sort of thing would miss its mark at St. Christopher's.

"You must find our poor town very quiet and dull," she said, when the conversation began to flag.

Beatrice opened wide her large eyes. "Dull? Not in the least, thank you. Why should I?"

"Such a change after the whirl of Society."

"But change is generally pleasant."

"Not from what you would call 'life' to stagnation."

"I never feel stagnated by my father," with a mischievous look.

"He is not generally considered dull."

Mrs. Winthrop flushed. "The Bishop—I never meant it! The most agreeable of men," she said, hurriedly; and then with a bound she jumped to another subject. "Do tell me," with great eagerness, "is it all true what they say of that old Lady Malvern?"

"She is a great friend of mine; what do they say of her?"

"She can't be a friend, Lady Falconer. You are only joking. They say," drawing down her chin, "that she makes bets."

"I made her lose one—only the other day."

"Plays baccarat."

"I've played it with her myself—often. Anything more?" with a sweet smile.

"Smokes cigarettes."

"Never saw her do it, but it is quite probable," imperturbably.

"My dear child!" in an expostulatory aside from Aunt Judy.

Mrs. Winthrop, as solemn as Fate, went on with her indictment. "That she has stables, a trainer, and race-horses," crescendo. "Everybody knows it."

"Of course, why should you grudge a poor old woman her toys?"

"Her toys! That is a mild term, Lady Falconer. Pray what does Miss Kennard think of these forms of amusement for old age?"

"Aunt Judy is not that sort exactly," with a loving glance in her direction. "She leaves Lady Malvern to choose her own games of play, and only remembers that she has been very good to me."

"She seemed to me very pleasant, very pleasant indeed, the only time I ever spoke to her," Miss Kennard remarked, in her gentle way.

Mrs. Winthrop looked from one to the other in perfect bewilder-

ment, scarcely able to credit her ears. "And what does the Bishop think of her?" she said, with a gasp.

"I'm afraid he thinks of her as the greatest joke out," Beatrice asserted with a broad smile.

"How very extraordinary!" And then she drew herself up, for she saw that she had not quite succeeded in making Lady Falconer feel small about her husband's disreputable relation. "The Archdeacon says, that there is nothing in life so sad as to see an old woman given over to frivolity," she went on in her most superior manner.

"I quite agree with you," readily, with a charming smile of assent. "It is so touching to see the interest Lady Malvern takes in Missionary-work. She was quite upset because the S. P. E. fixed their meeting for Derby Day. But as she said, 'the Derby,' you know, is settled the year before, so that is entirely their own fault."

"And may I ask to which she went?" primly.

"The Derby—of course."

"I don't see any 'of course' in it."

"A cheque would console the missionary-men for anyone's absence; but the Derby could scarcely be run without Lady Malvern to look on," in a matter of fact tone.

"Then my dear Lady Falconer let me tell you that she would have done no good at the meeting," Mrs. Winthrop said snappishly for she felt much as if she were continually being bitten by a midge.

"The S. P. E. didn't think so—they were awfully sorry, and they said so, and somebody got up and made a speech, 'about their dear and valued patroness.' I saw it myself in the Church Times."

After this last blow, Mrs. Winthrop thought it was time to go. Refusing a proffered cup of tea, she departed in a temper. Her righteous purpose of lowering Lady Falconer's pride through the medium of her husband's notorious aunt had entirely failed. Instead of deploring Lady Malvern's sins, the Bishop's daughter absolutely gloried in them, so she informed the Archdeacon as soon as she came across him; and the poor man, much troubled in his mind, rubbed his hair up the wrong way as he listened to a highly-coloured account of the interview.

"We must be thankful to Providence for having denied us any

children of our own," he said with a sigh, for gratitude on this score was difficult to him. "What should we have done with a fast daughter? I should never have been able to keep up any respect for my position here. I am very—very sorry for the poor Bishop."

"Auntie what have I done?" Beatrice exclaimed as the door closed on Mrs. Winthrop, "I've shocked the old cat, and that is just what Daddie said I mustn't do."

"Never mind," Miss Kennard responded cheerfully, out of a kindly wish to ease her niece's mind, "We will ask them to dinner, and perhaps she will forget it. It was scarcely polite of her to speak as she did of your husband's near relation."

"No, it was entirely her own fault," repentance vanishing directly. "She was a brute—and I'm not sorry a bit."

But she *was* sorry when her father looked grave on being told of her skirmish with the Archdeacon's wife.

"I daresay it was very good fun," he said gently, "but if fun is at the expense of principle it is far too dear at the price. I don't want Mrs. Winthrop to run away with the idea that we approve of fast ways. That would be rather fatal to a Bishop."

"Oh dear," with a comical look, "it's a heavy responsibility to be a Bishop's daughter. I almost wish—"

"No—you don't" he interrupted her hastily. "Think of the endless opportunities of good that lie before me, and weigh them in the balance against an effort now and then to check an unruly tongue."

"Oh Dad, don't be too good," as she hugged him, "or you will leave me so far behind."

"Not much fear of that child," he said with a sigh as he exaggerated his own short-comings.

Then he told her something of his work, in which she always took the deepest interest. He was going to hold an ordination on St. Thomas's Day, and he wished to lodge all the candidates in the Palace, so as to have them under his own eye. Miss Kennard was eager to fall into any of his plans, but she could not help being dismayed at an incursion of eighteen strange men. It was a large order, and the Bishop knew it, but he would not give way, so she was already beginning to face the difficulties with a cheerful courage that was sure to carry her through successfully.

"Dear old Auntie, she would face a lion on the rampage, if you

told her 'to," Beatrice remarked as she puckered her brows over a simple piece of knitting that seemed to be puzzling her. Then she asked after Mr. Wenham, of whom she had heard much though she had never seen him.

"I have great hopes of him," the Bishop said, cheerfully. "Doubts may come to any man, but they are easily conquered if the heart as well as the intellect is ready for conviction. I mean to have him here a few days before the rest."

After a surfeit of frivolity amongst a pleasure-loving crowd, these talks with her father were a source of great enjoyment to Beatrice. In the evening he liked to have some of the neighbouring clergy to dine with him—the Diocesan Missioner, if he chanced to be in St. Christopher's, and others. Amongst these were several men of more than average abilities, who were delighted to have a chance of refreshing their conversational powers, with some more exciting pabulum than parish details. Lady Falconer found many of them very agreeable, and managed to draw them out in a way that delighted her father. And after dinner, she sang to them if they were lovers of music, and made the evening pass as brightly as she could, because she knew that some of them led very dull lives, and she wanted them to rejoice in the fact that they had Edward Kennard for their Bishop.

There were pleasant drives over the hills and along the valleys round about St. Christopher's, and Aunt Judy with the two girls made expeditions in quest of new discoveries, as far as the short afternoons at the end of November would allow of them.

One day at Flora Vivian's instigation they invaded Fair-kytes, a fine old hall of an Elizabethan type standing in the midst of a deer-park—surrounded by a wall of eight feet high. The property came into Captain Pemberton's possession in consequence of the death of his first cousin in a steeple-chase. This cousin was the only son of that General Pemberton with whom Hugh used to live in Eaton Square. He was older than Hugh by several years, so the two boys had seen very little of each other. When the younger Pemberton left Eton, his cousin Charles considered himself already a man of the world, and his method of living up to the character was so unpleasant that his father turned him out of his house; and, being a choleric old fellow, told his butler to shut the door in his face if he ever dared to present himself. The General never saw

him again till he was summoned by telegram to a way-side inn in Huntingdonshire, where his son lay dead on a horse-hair sofa, just as they had picked him up, his racing jacket with the red and yellow hoops making a glaring contrast with the cold grey face. There was a mud stain on one sleeve, a bruise on the left temple—just where a strand of golden hair fell over it—but there was nothing to mar his beauty—that beauty which had gained him more love than all the virtues, and the wild, utterly worthless young fellow looked like an angel at rest !

The father broke his heart over his dead Absalom, though he had plagued him so mightily during his life ; and Fair-kytes came to Hugh in natural course of succession.

“ The Captain ought to marry and settle down, my lady,” Mrs. Merozn, the gaunt old house-keeper, observed, as the girls looked round the hall, which seemed oppressively silent. “ It’s flying in the face of Providence to let such a handsome mansion stand empty from year’s end to year’s end.”

Flo nodded brightly, and said “ So it is, I quite agree with you.”

Whilst Beatrice on the other hand assured her that Captain Pemberton was much happier as a soldier than a landowner, and said that he ought to stick to his profession, as long as it would stick to him.

(To be continued.)

Unto this End.

By MRS. AMY WOOD.

BRAMLEY looked at her closely.

Already his picture of "Esther" was forgotten, and in his mind's eye a new one, grander and truer, stood in its place. This woman, with her glowing eyes full of the knowledge of life in all its phases, and weary with dodging death, with that thin smile parting her cracked lips, and her full white throat and neck bared indifferently to the chill air, should impersonate "Ruin." Ruin complete, awful, and living.

His heart leaped with pride as he felt what he could make of it. It was stupendous luck meeting with her!

"You have never been employed as model before?"

It seemed incredible that this woman, with a face and figure that half the artists in London would have raved over and paid liberally for, should never have earned her living that way. Incredible that he should be the first to find her.

"No," she said, sullenly. "I hate artists."

"Then why come to me?" he asked, smiling, more with the desire of seeing the sombre fire in her eyes again than from any idle curiosity.

"You happen to be the first to offer me work. Starving becomes rather monotonous after a while. Have you ever tried it? It's a sensation that palls upon one." She laughed harshly.

Decidedly he was in luck to-day. Her eyes were magnificent.

"Then you will come to-morrow at ten o'clock to this address." He handed her a card and all the money he had with him. It wasn't much. "You will consider yourself exclusively my model for the next month," he continued, sharply; "and you will come sober."

She read the card, and a grim smile passed over her face. "I'll promise nothing. I'll come in payment for this," looking at the money, "as long as it lasts; but when we are quits I shall please myself."

"Very well, as you like."

He never betrayed great anxiety for anything, therefore, as a rule, he got what he wanted.

"Good afternoon. To-morrow at ten." With one more good stare into her face he nodded to her and strode away into the gathering twilight.

Many people turned and looked after him as he passed them—some enviously, some regretfully, as they remembered the time when their own faces had been just as full of purpose, just as bright.

He noticed no one. His thoughts were full of the immediate future; of Nan's delight at the finding of the new model, which delight would express itself in cutting little speeches about his stupidity in not finding something better than his doll-faced "Esther" long ago; of the courage he would display in not letting her go shares, always with the knowledge that in the end he would do just what she wanted; of the success the new picture should be, and of the many pennies it would bring in; of the consequent opportunity it would give him to suggest to Nan that—but there! She was such an extraordinary girl, nay, woman—for had she ever been a girl?—and he was more than half afraid of her.

And above all—for the present pressed upon him—of the fact that he was very hungry, and that he had nothing substantial in his cupboard at home. He felt ruefully at his empty pockets, and decided to take "Esther" to the dealer first thing in the morning and get what he could for her. It was a good thing, despite Nan calling the model a doll-faced chit, and he ought to clear £50 at least.

He turned into one of the dreary houses in Fitzroy Street and bounded up to the top flat. The words of a song, in a woman's clear voice, came from the studio, and he smiled to himself as he went in.

"Just the very one I wanted, Nan! There *is* nothing too high to climb if the heart is young; but yours isn't, as I have often told you. I believe you have lived at least a few thousand years."

"No nonsense, Tom, I'm starving!" Tom started, this was the second woman to-day who had told him she was starving. "Really, I suppose I am singing for my supper! And for once, I assure you, I have used some very expressive language with regard to your

carefulness, for why you need have doubted the honesty of your landlady to-day, out of all other days, bothers me! Yes, for once you have locked your pantry. Tom, don't stand there like a stuck pig, but give me something to eat. I am getting light-headed for want of food."

He looked at her, as she held her head in a fixed position with both hands, but there was no smile in the eyes in answer to his own, and he hastily turned and unlocked the cupboard. He soon put before her bread and butter, a tin of sardines, and the roots of a tinned tongue—all that he possessed—saying as he did so: "What a fool I am! But why didn't you make me understand sooner? Women are the deuce; and sooner than marry one and have her for ever playing the fool,—yes, drink every drop, there's nothing like it as medicine."

Presently she pushed her chair away from the feast, which was intermingled with leaking tubes of paint, brushes, and dirty, smelly paint rags, and said contentedly: "That's better! How about you? You look all right, but I guess you're hungry. You mostly always are, you know, Tom! Is this all you have? These remnants?"

"Yes, *but* I've had such a find! A new model! Splendid! She'll make my fortune! Such a head, and such—but there, you wait and see." He nodded complacently. He had got ahead of Nan for once.

"Tell," she said, quaintly.

"No." He loved to rouse her. "I say, though, turn your head a little to the left—yes, so; now look at me. By Jove! you are like her!" He continued, genuinely interested, "I can imagine you looking just like she did when she said, 'It's a sensation that palls,' *if* you had lived the life she must have lived for the last twenty years or so. It's not much of a compliment, Nan; but you will see what I mean when she comes to-morrow."

The woman moved impatiently. "All your geese are swans, Tom, myself included. If we can make money out of her, however—you will let me paint her too, of course? that's the main thing."

Here was the opening for Tom's courage. "Look here, Nan," he began.

"Wait a bit," she said, sharply. A strange, weary disheartened look settled on her face—an expression that he often saw and never understood. "What was she dressed in."

"I don't remember," he said, carelessly.

"That's a lie!"

He blushed like a girl at her words. "I know it is," he said, frankly; "and I beg your pardon, Nan. Her dress was horribly dragged and old. It was dark, and had a smear of bright green paint down the front. Her jacket was turned back at the throat with shabby fur; and there was one really unusual thing about her, she wore a signet ring on the first finger of her left hand. When she said she was starving, I idly wondered why she hadn't pawned that!"

The woman was looking through the window when he finished speaking, and he wondered if she were still hungry. But she turned quickly, saying: "No, she would never part with that. You've done rather a peculiar thing, for in your model you have met my mother."

"That your mother? Don't joke, Nan, she was terrible. You don't know how terrible!"

"Joke? Not know? Do I look as though I were joking?" The intense bitterness of her voice convinced him. "Terrible? Do I not live with her? Should I not know? You have either a very short memory, or you have never believed me when I have told you the—well, the truth about my mother." She paused a moment, then continued more lightly. "It was a foolish bit of pride on my part that prevented me from ever letting you see her. I am so like her in looks, and—well, I like people to have a good opinion of me. It's my largest conceit."

He stared at her stupidly. No, he hadn't quite realised it. He had always thought Nan exaggerated things, that—but she was waiting for him to say something.

"I'm awfully sorry," he began, lamely. "I mean—why, good heavens! You were really starving then? I had no idea. Why didn't you tell me before that you were hard up? It was disgraceful of you, Nan, simply disgraceful." It was easiest to scold her.

"I don't know, I always hope for the best, though, God knows, it never comes! I haven't sold anything for months, and we have pawned everything. Look at me! and I do like to be well dressed. I'm hardly decent."

He longed to tell her she looked splendid, as indeed she did for all

her shabbiness, and that he loved her in anything; but he was afraid.

"We have had nothing to eat all yesterday and to-day," she continued stolidly. "And to-night I came to you to beg. I was getting tired of being hungry. "Remember," she flashed out, "I shall pay you back."

"Don't be a fool, Nan."

She looked at him and a swift change passed over her face. She threw back her head and burst out laughing, a wholly humorous laugh.

"You're right. I *am* a fool. Here am I," she said gaily, "making a tragedy and a long face out of the simplest thing in the world! Let's condense it. Mother and daughter starving. Daughter leaves mother with strict injunctions to patiently await her return, and comes to young man to beg or demand moneys. Mother sensibly disobeys daughter and goes into the highways (I think you said Hampstead Heath?) meets with young man, who understands the value of her charms, and straightway empties his pockets into her lap—show me even one penny? Ah, I knew you couldn't. Mother consequently finds a vocation, daughter a good meal, and young man an excellent model. Everything comfortable once more, for young man has always known that daughter had impossible mother, though he preferred to forget it. So that's nothing to get into a state about, and that she's 'Terrible,' I think you said 'Terrible?' is all the better for his picture. Hooray!"

She danced round the room gracefully, avoiding all obstacles and stopped before him with an inimitable curtsey. "I don't want to go shares with your wonderful model. Now, don't blush, you know you didn't want me to, for you knew I'd beat you. I'll get a better to-morrow, and when our pictures are sold, I'll hold a fatter cheque in my hands than you will in yours—so there now! Now I'll go. May I take half that bread? Mother won't be in till late, of course, and very likely won't have a penny left! I say, isn't it awful to people in our circumstances to have such healthy appetites as you and I have! Supply and demand never do fit in with me, do they with you? I really *am* going."

She went towards the door, paused a moment, turned and came right up to him as he stood, silent, bewildered and all admiring.

"Do you know," she said slowly, "now that you have seen *her*, and everything, I would like you to kiss me to-night." She noted the incredulous look on his face and hastened to add, "You don't know what it is to be a woman, a very human woman," she said softly, "like I really am, with all the craving for a caress from a father or mother or brother. I—I have never had one all my life! Yes, I know what you are going to say—but—I don't want that kind of love."

She turned away from him for a second, then she lifted up her face to his, as a child might have done; he bent over her slowly and touched her cheek lightly with his lips. A smile of satisfaction spread over her face.

"Ah, that was very nice. A little thing like that, you know, sometimes does a woman a lot of good, it makes her feel a little more human, more—but Good Lord! how I shall laugh at the memory of this to-morrow! Tom, can't you picture it in the daylight? "*Nan sentimental.*" Sure, you're totally devoid of humour. Yes?" "

Her rapid changes of mood always jarred upon him, and he said quickly,

"Nan, don't. Directly you are the least bit womanly you turn and ridicule yourself. It's unnatural and—well, it disgusts me."

"Hush," she said earnestly, and she lifted her head, "don't speak like that. Can't you see that if I didn't, the iron would eat into my heart and I should die of it! If I believed in a higher power, I would pray to him every day of my life to leave me my laughter. Everyone in the world has something to make the loneliness of his or her life bearable, and I—I have the power of turning myself into a huge joke whenever I feel things too keenly. Don't wish the power away." A smile broke over her face again. "I'm sorry now I let you kiss me. You are stupid and can't see further than your wretched snub of a nose! Apropos of nothing at all, when is the sending-in day for the salon?"

"A month yesterday," he answered mechanically. He couldn't understand her at all.

"I am a greater fool than usual to-night, Nan. Forgive me dear." He knew he had blundered somehow.

"Oh, it's all right. Let's both laugh." She was irresistible and he joined in heartily.

"Well, good night. No, you mustn't come. It's only a step you know, and my landlady thinks me a model of propriety. If she saw you with me, with that helpless smile on your face, the illusion would be destroyed for ever and I can't afford that—I owe two weeks rent."

"What nonsense! As though she had never seen us together before! Is this expression better? Yes? Well come along."

CHAPTER II.

NEXT day Tom sold his "Esther" for £10 more than he had expected, and this enabled him to pay Nan's mother liberally for her services.

In the weeks that followed, he enjoyed to the full the keen pleasure of creating something worthy of the labour, the thought, the curses and blessing, the pangs and heart-breaking disappointments expended over it.

That his model often failed him troubled him not at all. When she *did* come, she was all that he wanted. The pose was an easy one, and hour after hour she would lean back indolently in the chair, absolutely indifferent to her surroundings. She seldom spoke and only when he mentioned Nan's name did she seem conscious that he was less silent. Then the thin smile would come to her lips and the sullen light to her eyes. Once she startled him by saying,

"You love her. 'Love?' It's a pretty word, isn't it? and it's generally associated with pretty women. If I had been ugly, Nan would never have been born and that would have been one sin the less for me to reckon. See you to it!"—she continued fiercely, "that you bring nothing into the world that shall be a reproach to you every hour of your life—that you shall be afraid to look in the eyes—that you shall shun and hate because you realise the wrong you have done it! Yet I was good once! Once when there was no chance of being the reverse, and God knows the strength of women so well, so well that—" she paused a moment with a bitter smile playing round her mouth, "when the chance of being wicked (and what is wickedness after all!) comes, he sends us *man* to help us!" She got up hastily and put her hat on. "You have made me talk. How dare you! I like to forget—forget everything."

He whistled as the door slammed behind her, for he knew he had inadvertently raised a devil, and he would have to work alone for the next few days.

Nan rarely came, and when she did she would tell him nothing of her own work. He could see that what she was doing possessed her, heart and soul. Had he been less occupied, her silence would have hurt him. As it was, he respected it, more from inattention than anything else.

One night, towards the end of the month, she came in with a rush.

"No, go on. I have only come in for a few minutes to—well to see the 'Ruin.' Oh, Tom, she *is* a beauty! Isn't that arm, though, a trifle—just a trifle too——; but no you're right. It's daring naturalness defies criticism. There's no trickery about it either. It's good solid work. It's *good*, Tom."

His hand shook as he recklessly emptied a tube of rose madder on to his palette. Then he steadily worked it into the background.

"You shouldn't, Tom; besides it's beastly sloppy stuff, anyhow, and takes an age to dry, you know quite well." She sat down opposite to him, and for the first time since she came in, he looked at her.

"You've been starving yourself again, Nan! You've been grizzling too. You've made yourself look horrid."

"I've been doing nothing of the sort. I've been working harder than I ever worked in my life; and it's been worth it. And it's finished! I hardly know whether to laugh or cry! If you speak kindly to me I shall shriek."

"I've no intention of speaking kindly to you. I think you're the greediest woman I know. I've let you see this in all its stages, and you've not so much as told me your subject! Bah! Let's go and have some supper somewhere. See if there's any money to spare, while I put this away."

She took up a little grinning god, hidden in a flower-pot, and emptied it into her lap. "Nine pounds, seven, and elevenpence, exactly," she counted. "Sending pictures over there costs such a horrid lot, doesn't it?"

"Yours *is* going then?"

"Yes."

"I may see it to-night?"

"Of course. Didn't I come on purpose to tell you it was finished! Let's have some supper first though, for I *am* so hungry. Here's half a sovereign, we mustn't spend a penny more. Am I tidy?"

He fixed one or two hairpins more securely into the thick masses of hair. "You'll do," he said brusquely.

Then they went out into the muddy streets. The continual roar and movement there settled Nan into her normal condition. She took a long breath.

"Ah, this is better. Those four walls of yours stifled me. Besides, a gas-lit room always makes me feverish, intense and unreal in a way. All the work I do at night, I have to tone down in the daylight. Of course," catching a smile on his face and reading it aright, "of course the yellows anyhow, you silly. All the same, my night work is the best. But here we are! And something smells very good. We'll have some of *that*. Our favourite seat is empty. No, you may order, and don't bother me. You know what I like, and I will have water, very plain water, anything else will go to my head to-night."

Tom always felt satisfaction on going with her to any public place. She had none of that awkward bashfulness and helplessness that make some women conspicuous, and she never embarrassed him in any way.

Wherever she went she was admired. By few women, it must be admitted, for she was too beautiful in an unusual way, she laughed and talked too confidently, and above all she was too natural to escape being reckoned by them as affected and, probably, bad. Men admired her unreservedly, and did not trouble themselves about her morals.

While Tom arranged their meal with the waiter, she looked calmly round and met any glance directed towards herself steadily and without any self-consciousness.

"Not just now, Tom," she said in a low voice, "but presently, look at the young couple near the screen, and tell me what you make of them. If you eat any more bread you will spoil your appetite. Well?"

"He's got a painfully honest face, and his coat fits very badly. She's a nonentity."

"How horribly unimaginative you are, Tom. Listen! He is a very young lawyer in a very country town. She is the parson's

daughter, and they have been married about a year. Business—he hasn't much, and this is an event—has brought him to town for a week, and he thinks a little brightness will do 'wife' good. So, after tearful injunctions to mamma—for of course granny took the baby—not to let it jump out of her arms, or cry itself into a fit, and be sure to telegraph for her if there are any signs of croup, and if the food doesn't agree, etc., etc., she came with her fond husband. Shall I tell you some more? Yes? Well, they have both had a good stare at me, and they class me with the doubtful-looking woman over there 'Wife' is blushing furiously at the thought that it isn't quite the proper place to come to, and he is inclined to agree with her. 'But, well,' he says, 'the dinner is ordered, half eaten in fact, and it is cheap, and really, Smart, of the eminently respectable firm of Smart, Bruce and Smart, recommended it as a delightful place for a little meal.' And I quite agree with Smart, don't you?"

"You're talking a fearful lot of rubbish."

"I know I am, and you know you are enjoying it. Now I shan't say a word more till—till she blushes again, and tells her husband that you or some other man is staring so hard at her that she feels quite uncomfortable. Tom, tell me, how is it that the more uninteresting and plain a woman is, the more she believes that every man is wishful of making violent love to her, and that it is only her wonderful strength of mind and purity that prevents them, eh?"

"I really don't know," he answered weakly.

"Yes, I know I am talking a lot. I believe I am excited. I'm wondering all the time what you will think of my picture, and if you'll own it's better than yours."

He was prepared to own anything now. The cooking was excellent—Nan. was in her most charming mood—and, there was no doubt that his "Ruin" *was* a beauty—the best thing he'd done.

"Order coffee, Tom, I'm aching to be off." She took the cigarette he had just made for her and lighted it from his match. She smiled largely at the horrified little wife opposite, then got up to go. "I can't wait for the coffee. Be quick. Oh, why will you keep dirty little half-pennies amongst your one bit of gold? No, I *hadn't* any gloves." She did not throw away the cigarette till she was well outside. "Wasn't she a study, Tom?"

"Not beside you, dear."

"I like to feel the rain in my face, don't you?" She had a

perfect genius for changing the conversation when she wished. "It comes so softly, so 'damply,' like a baby's kiss."

Tom looked in her face and then quickly away. Nan in her soft moods was too beautiful, the temptation to take her in his arms—before all the world if need be—too strong. No more was said till they reached the house where Nan and her mother lodged. She paused before she put the key in the lock.

"It will look better in daylight of course, but, now that it's finished, I cannot wait till to-morrow for you to see it."

He understood the feeling.

"All right, child, go ahead."

They went quietly up the three flights of stairs and straight into a room opposite them. It was almost in darkness, and as Nan turned up the gas, she said,

"I wonder if mother is where I left her? Yes, look!"

The three burners flared noisily. That and the heavy breathing of the woman on the sofa, were the only sounds to be heard. Yet Tom saw nothing but the canvas, which occupied one side of the room; and Nan's heart seemed to stand still as she watched his face.

"How did you learn it!" he said hoarsely. "It is magnificent! It is horrible! It is alive."

He stood back from the picture and looked at it from every aspect of the room. After some minutes he said, enviously: "Nan, I would give ten years of my life to have done it. How old are you?"

"Twenty-seven."

She stood with her hands tightly clasped behind her. This was worth living for. It was a foretaste of the success she knew would be hers, for as one man now stood and felt the truth of her work, so should hundreds, nay thousands, in a few weeks time.

It was a common enough scene, a scene that can be found at any time by those who are not too nice to look at it, yet few would care to choose such a subject.

To the left, in the corner of the picture a woman lay on some filthy straw. In the foreground a little to the right a dark-haired girl of eleven or twelve sat hushing a little puling infant in her arms. The cold light of early morning struggled through the dirty window and on the rickety table, between the woman and child, a tallow candle had just given its last flicker; the thin line of its smoke lost itself in the griminess of the ceiling.

The woman was still beautiful. Vice and drink had not completed their work, and Nan had just caught the boundary line between what the woman could have been and what she was. Her features were not coarsened or brutalised in any way, but an indefinable something in them suggested the total absence of self-respect, the hopelessness of her life, the absolute loss in the belief of the goodness of man. One white arm was flung above her head and the other lay at her side; a bottle had rolled away from the lax fingers and the contents made a dark stream as they licked up the dust on their way towards the window. Her bosom was bare and showed a cruel bruise on the fair skin. It was on this bruise the girl's gaze was directed and there was an unholy satisfaction on her weary little face as she looked.

Nan had not spared one detail. The whole thing was awful in its reality. The onlooker could hear the thin wail of the hungry infant and the heavy breathing of the drunken woman. The thick smell of the guttering candle and the sickliness of the spilled spirit, filling the already exhausted atmosphere of a room wherein pure air could never come, choked one. Tom turned away from it at last. "There's only one thing, Nan—"

"I know. It's too real to sell easily. It will hurt people. Can't you hear them as they pause in front of it? 'What a horrible picture! Who is it by? A woman, too! What a coarse mind she must have to paint a thing like that! There are plenty of beautiful subjects in life without going out of one's way to disgust people with this. Not that it's without merit,' etc. etc., and so and so on. Won't they ever understand that some people have only such subjects as those before their eyes always! Where is the beauty to come from? Beauty is expensive—while this—this is ours for nothing! Do you know my price for it?" she continued excitedly. "A thousand pounds."

"Phew!" he whistled.

"Yes, but I'll get it. I must get it. It's worth it. No one can paint a picture like that unless one has lived every inch of it. It has been my life, God knows, my life for twenty-seven years! It's surely worth that sum?"

"It is, Nan." Again he examined the picture inch by inch. "Who is the little one on your knee?"

"My—well, my half sister I suppose you would call her! For-

tunately for her she was delicate and died. I've always been strong."

"Nan, you know your're not sorry."

"Only sometimes. Times like to-night, when I'm tired and excited, and the fever of hard steady work is stilled for a bit and one has time to wonder what will come next. Times when I look across at her (Tom looked at the sofa and saw the sleeping woman for the first time since his entrance) and hate men for making her what she is."

"Nan," he said impulsively, "how have you kept so straight with such an awful example always before you?"

"Rather, how could I go wrong! But don't let's talk about it. I'm dreadfully tired and I'm going to send you away now. I want to dream of my success! You have done me a lot of good."

"I can't say what I think of it, dear," he said simply. "It's too good. Good-night and sleep well."

"You will come in the morning and arrange about the packing?"

"Yes. By the way, what have you called it?"

"The title is as common as the subject." She smiled a little, then continued steadily—"but, 'My mother' expresses just what I want. No it's no use looking disapproval—the title is as settled as the price."

She gave a hard little nod which he knew was final.

Sad at heart he turned and left her.

CHAPTER III.

ONE evening, in the beginning of July, Nan came with a more satisfied expression on her face than he had seen there for some time. She sat down without any greeting, as was her wont, and took off her hat.

"Mother is dead," she said simply and without a trace of emotion.

"Good heavens! How?"

"She was run over this morning, and died just as I reached the hospital. It is a great relief. I am very glad. As I looked at her poor dead face, I asked the doctor who was with her if he didn't agree with me in that it was a life best ended. I fancy he thought

she was a protégée of mine, or something of that sort, for he said, "Decidedly," then when I said I was her daughter, he looked at me as though I were some new specimen he would like to dissect. I couldn't help smiling at his expression and he smiled too. Then he turned abruptly away and left me. I wonder why?"

"He felt your unnaturalness, as I do, Nan," he said sadly.

Her unnaturalness! That was ever the way. Her extreme womanliness and humaness were read all wrong by even those who knew and loved her best. Not in her presence, no—saving Tom—her fascination and her subtle sympathy carried them away despite themselves and they would agree involuntarily to all she said and did; it was not till they had got out of reach of her voice and vivid personality that they remembered her damning unusualness and the all sufficing fact that she was not natural, as they understood nature.

"What is naturalness?" she asked sharply. "Acting contrary to what we feel? For that's what you want me to do."

"No, Nan dear, but——"

"Ah, Tom," she interrupted, with a world of pathos in her voice, "why will you not understand? Why can't you see? All these years since I have been old enough to understand, my heart has ached in pity for her terrible life. I know so well how she suffered, how utterly lost and hopeless she was. Life had become a weariness, an utter weariness! She cursed the daylight when she awoke, for it meant dreary stretches of hours to be got through somehow. The sensual enjoyment of getting drunk—Don't shrink like that, Tom; do *you* never face the truth about the people around you?—getting drunk was her only pleasure. When that was over, she quarrelled with death for passing her by. You think I am heartless to speak like this of her! *She* would not. If she could feel now she would be unutterably glad that what she waited for—oblivion—has come to her at last. Ah! how I've longed for this rest for her! Poor tired mother! And should I lament now that it has come? You don't understand, Tom, you don't understand."

She turned her back on him and looked out into the gaslit streets.

"You will miss her, Nan?" he said timidly. He did not know what to say.

"Yes, I've only myself now."

She turned round suddenly, smiling oddly.

"And you've no idea how I hated and despised her when I was a

child! Principally I think because she was always somehow afraid of me. She used to say I was the child of the devil and that I had all his ways, consequently it seemed to me that he must have been a rather pleasing personage (you see I always thought well of myself) and I cultivated a very extensive admiration for him, which increased in proportion to her detestation of him. I am still proud of this same devil parent. He not only gave me his talent, but, as you know, payed R—— liberally to teach me all he knew."

She looked at Tom defiantly, then blew a kiss to an imaginary person behind him—"The Devil! God bless him!" she cried.

Then the mocking smile died away and a very human pitiful expression softened her whole face.

"But there," she continued, "Mother and I got on better afterwards, and for the last ten years or more I have tried to take care of her. Oh, Tom, why are women born women unless they can be born mentally, morally, physically strong too! It is cruel, cruel to think of the thousands that are wasted, misapplied, destroyed and blotted out of real life, through no fault of their own! Let no man judge us!" she continued bitterly, "let them ruin us. They understand that best. I suppose there are some good men? I think you are one." She looked at him curiously. "If you are, you will understand how it is I am glad Death has taken her away from it all. So we will not talk of it any more."

She took a lot of cuttings from her pocket and handed them to him. He lighted the gas, for the room was almost in darkness, drew down the blind, then sat down beside her and read them, one by one.

"They're splendid notices, just like all the others," he said warmly.

"Yes, and they tell me nothing that I do not know. I *know* it is the picture of the year without their paltry assurances. I *know* it is horrible. I mean it to be. Let these people feel for a few minutes the horror of some women's lives," she continued fiercely. "But above all, let them pay me for the glimpse I have given them. Yet—" there was a sob in her voice. "What do they care? It is easier to pass by. Tom," she said very quietly, "what shall I do if it does not sell?" She paused a moment, then in a hard voice continued, "I am completely without education. All I know, apart from my painting, I have learnt from observation. I speak fairly correctly—

I inherit that—and I can read aloud. Yet I fear very much that one little accomplishment will not get me a situation as companion. Can you see me ‘companioning’ a dear old lady, Tom?” She paused. “I could exhibit myself on the stage, I have a beautiful figure and a still more beautiful face—I could even act a little, or,” she shuddered visibly, “I could go out as model.”

“Dear, *don’t*. It *will* sell, since mine has, yours *must*. If it doesn’t, the next one will—and then your pot-boilers, if you could sink your realism a little, would sell like wildfire.”

“But I can’t,” she interrupted, “I am steeped in it. I can only paint the things I understand by having lived them. And, naturally, they hurt people too much for them to wish to have them on their walls.” She looked across at Tom, and her eyes grew large and frightened as she continued. “I lie awake at nights and think of it! It, the great fear of—bah! I won’t think of it—now, anyhow.” She leaned back in her chair, and closed her eyes.

Tom remained silent. There was nothing to say—nothing. He knew only too well that all she had said, and more, was true. She had not made a penny for months, and only accepted from him, as a loan, enough to keep body and soul together.

“There is one more thing left for me to do,” she said slowly.

“Yes?” He was glad she had ended the silence.

“Marry.” She gave a short mirthless laugh as she continued. “Don’t look so startled, Tom. Why, it’s the commonest thing in the world, isn’t it? It’s rather funny though, perhaps, in connection with me. But, there, don’t let’s talk about it. Let’s forget everything except laughter and shop. Look you, I’ve forgotten already!” She settled herself more comfortably, leaning back luxuriously, and clasping her hands behind her head.

“I went to see Dobbs. What a nice wholesome flavour there is about a name like Dobbs! Yes, Dobbs, and Polti and Hanson, this afternoon. Found each of them in, and quite enjoyed myself. They were particularly dull, and I was particularly brilliant. So I made them more in love with me than ever.” She paused to note the effect of her words, but he made no sign. “After all,” she continued lazily, “there’s some satisfaction in being a woman—a beautiful woman, and likewise not a fool, of course, I mean. The momentary feeling of power it gives one at times is vastly entertaining. The most entertaining part of the entertainment being the fact that men

are ignorant of their strength. A woman's power is merely an imaginary thing, whether it be power of beauty or will. Any man, provided his strength of purpose be strong enough, can make any woman do anything, only they don't know it always—some do, and these always gain their ends—some don't, and these we tyrannise over. See? Yes, my good looks afford me a lot of amusement." She got up and went to the mirror hanging by the window. She leaned her elbows on its edge and her head upon her hands, and gazed intently at the reflection. Gradually the eyes lit up with merriment, and a broad smile spread over the whole face. She turned swiftly, and caught his look of grave disapproval. "Yes, say it!" she said laughingly. "I know you're dying to. Go on—say it! No? Well then, I will. My mother died a few hours ago, and here I am frivolously expatiating on the assistance that good looks give to entertainment—it's not natural, it's hardly decent—eh?" She mimicked his voice to a nicety.

It was true. He was remembering that her mother had only died that morning. No, he couldn't understand her always. She flung herself petulantly into a chair.

"Tom, what *is* the matter with you to-night? I never knew you so stupid. Say something for heaven's sake!"

"Er—I beg your pardon, Nan. I was thinking—I mean—"

"Thinking? Well, you might be polite enough at least to think aloud, if you *were* thinking," she said scornfully.

"What were they doing?" he said lamely. "I mean Polti and the rest?"

"Good work. They were all suffering from the same complaint as myself, impecuniosity, but it attacks them different ways. They were all agreed, however, to pander to the public taste so as to reap pennies. So Polti has broken out into a girl's head that makes you want to kiss it as you look at it; Hanson, into a beautifully clean landscape that has never seen the country; and Dobbs—" she burst into a ringing laugh—"Dobbs, into the portrait of a fat alderman!"

Tom joined feebly in the laugh. He felt uncomfortable, somehow. If only he could understand her! If only——"

She got up and pinned on her hat, jabbing the pins through impatiently. "I don't like you at all to-night," she said with some heat. "You've not been a bit nice. I don't know when I've dis-

liked you so much. No, not a word, I'm sick of you, there. Yes, I know that's vulgar, and I like it to be vulgar."

Without another word she left him. As he went to close the door (she always left doors open—she said it was more artistic! Heaven knows why!) he heard her running upstairs again. When she rejoined him, she remarked breathlessly, "I only came back to say that wasn't it a good thing she didn't get run over before we'd finished our pictures! And that—well, I'm not sick of you, only you shouldn't be such a solemn ass. You aggravate me into saying all sorts of things.—See? That's all!"

She went down the stairs slowly, singing at the top of her voice, "There's nought too high to climb, when the heart is young."

CHAPTER IV.

"I AM so tired."

"Come and sit here by the window, there is more air. That dress is awfully thick for this weather, eh, Nan?"

"Yes," she said abstractedly.

"Any news?"

"None. And the salon closes to-morrow."

"That's nothing. Most pictures are sold the very last day, you know. Don't bother about it, dear. By the way," he continued with studied indifference, "who was that man with you? I was looking out of the window, and couldn't help seeing you both."

"A very rich man, and he wants to buy——"

"Your picture?" he cried excitedly.

"No—*me*."

Good God, Nan! What do you mean?"

"He wants to marry me," she said very quietly. "And he is ready to give a very good price for me."

He turned away and busied himself with something on the mantel-piece.

"What was his name?" His voice was now as quiet as her own.

"Sir Richard Aycliffe."

His ruddy face blanched like a woman's. He knew the name well. He turned to her again.

"Nan—you cannot mean it! He is notorious! He—he is thoroughly bad!"

"Yes—he looks it," she said indifferently.

He was bewildered, and hardly knew what he said.—"He is nearly sixty!"

"Quite, I should think." She gave a little laugh.

"Nan, you are teasing me. It's all a joke." He smiled into her face, but her expression startled him.

She rose and began to speak excitedly. "It's no joke. It's the terrible truth, Tom. I'm tired of poverty, never ending, grinding poverty! I've tasted nothing else all my life! I work and work, and it ends in nothing. Nothing but large criticisms and an empty purse. I cannot even go over there," there was a sob in her voice, "and see the people's faces as they look at my picture! I have hungered for that more than anything! Ah, because I laugh you have thought I have not cared or felt—but—well, I'm tired of laughing now. Tired of everything that has been a part of my life. The cold rooms, and rags, and ugliness, and hunger, and unfulfilled hopes, and never-ending disappointments. I want a little comfort, and ease, and beauty!" She stretched out her arms with a passionate gesture. "I want the luxury of allowing myself to feel, to think! I want to see things and know—I want to experience the other side of life! There must be another side! Or is it all a striving and a striving and an ending in nothing? Nay, money can always give food at least; and at present I have not even that. Oh, you don't know what it is to be a woman and feel your helplessness!"

She sat down wearily and stared out of the window. Presently she was conscious that he was standing beside her, and speaking in the kind of way that always claimed her attention.

"Nan, dear—I knew this day must come sooner or later. It has only come a little soon and you are not ready for it. Are you listening, dear? You know how wholly I love you, and how I would do anything in my power to help you?" She nodded. "Well, I would rather kill you than let you, if I can help it, put yourself in the power of this man. I know, Nan—I *know*! You would be ashamed every day of your life." His voice faltered, but he continued bravely. "It were better even that you should marry me. No," he added quickly as he met her eyes, "I would ask nothing in return—nothing. It would be enough honour and happiness for me

to know I had the right to help you at all times. Dear, your time should be all your own, to do your own work in your own way. You should be as free as you are now. I have often thought of this, but the time to tell you has never come till now. Oh, don't take your hands away, Nan! Listen a little longer—I will work so hard, so hard—only give me a little time and you shall have money in plenty! My name will soon be well known: why, the 'Ruin' has brought me three orders already! Oh, my dear, only trust me. Don't answer me now. Think it over—you will —"

"Tom, I can't," she interrupted, "I *can't*. It would never do. I should be burdened with the consciousness that I was receiving all and giving nothing in return. I could not even join in the housekeeping expenses, for I don't make any money nowadays, somehow! No, dear, don't think about it any more, for I *can't*."

"Yet you are willing to sell yourself to this man, who will exact to the full his share of the bargain," he said bitterly. He went and sat down by the table and leaned his head on his hands.

"Yes, that's just it! Can't you see, Tom? It must be a fair exchange or I will have nothing to do with it. And I rate myself highly! It seems that I must sell myself anyhow, so I am going to sell myself to the highest bidder. See? Yes, I know all about the talk of the 'morality' of marriage and the 'consecration,' etc. They are mere names and may mean just what people choose to make them mean. 'Love' consecrates in a way, but really I know nothing about the little consecrating god. 'Passion' I know. I have lived amongst it all my life, but I don't even feel that. It's to be a purely commercial transaction, you see. I give myself, and he gives me wealth and all that it can buy. We leave sentiment altogether out of the question."

"Nan!" She noticed how white and strained his face had grown. "Nan, it is terrible to hear you talk like this! You cannot be in earnest!" he clasped and unclasped his hands nervously; "and I don't know what to say! How can I make you understand the life this man will expect you to lead? Do you expect to be happy?"

"Happy? Happiness has always been, and always will be, an unknown quantity to me. Women who, from their earliest childhood, have lived the life I have lived, seen what I have seen, known what I have known, can never be happy. Their knowledge is too

bitter, and learnt at too great a cost. But they can save themselves from starvation—almost always—and *charity*, and that is all I am going to do."

"And your work?" The words were almost a groan.

"He has sworn he will not interfere with it in any way; in fact, the reverse, I think, Tom." She smiled across at him, but her eyes belied the smile. "Think of the joy of unlimited supplies of models, and double tubes of pure ultramarine and canvases and brushes galore, without having to go down on one's knees for them!"

"Nonsense," he said, roughly. Then he added: "Do you care for him at all, Nan? Even the least bit?"

"Care for him! *Care* for him!" her eyes grew very black. "He disgusts me and ——" she shuddered. "But there are other things worse. Starvation for one, and I dread that more than anything in the whole world! The very word is filled with terrors for me, and sometimes I awake in the night from terrible dreams that I am dying for want of a little crust of bread! My face is wet with the tears I have shed in my sleep—tears of weakness and despair!" She got up and walked up and down the room quickly. She was greatly agitated. "Full of the fear that the dreams are real, I jump out of bed and count over what money I have—*your* money!—and wonder how long I can make it last. Then I flare up the gas and paint. I strive after something pleasing, something pretty and kissable, something that will sell quickly and readily, but it always turns out a bit of the tragedy of life—always, always! I paint till the daylight steals in and makes the gas look pale and sickly, then I creep back to bed and laugh." She paused a moment in her rapid flow of words, then said quite quietly: "Yes, *anything* rather than starvation."

"Nan, you know I would never let you feel it, whether you married me or not."

She looked at him coldly. "I cannot take anything more from you. It hurts me too much."

"Yet, this other thing that you are going to do is worse than borrowing from a friend. Ah, you don't fear it, because you don't know it! Would to God I could make you see the wrong of it!"

She looked at him quickly. "It's no use, Tom, I have decided."

"No, no! You shall not—yet. Wait till every chance of selling

your picture is gone, Nan! Say you will wait till then! Wait for two, three days, settle nothing yet! Promise me, Nan, promise!"

"Very well," she said, wearily. "Until every chance of selling my picture is gone," she repeated.

"And if it sells you will dismiss this man?"

Her eyes lighted up. "Why, of course, Tom! It's money I want, not men. Yet it's difficult to get one without the other," she said, slowly.

He went up to her and took her hands in his. "Dear little woman," he said, softly. Her eyes met his, and he saw in them something that lingered with him for the rest of his life.

"You are the best friend a woman ever had, Tom. Never think I have not realised it always, and—and I am going home now to think. I want to be alone—until I have settled. Then I will come and tell you. Good-night, dear."

She kissed him once lightly on his lips, and turned quickly away from him. She paused a moment at the door, then shut it softly behind her.

He stood staring stupidly at it. It was the first time since he had known her that she had shut it after her.

* * * *

Three days later, in a handsomely-furnished room in the Hotel Victoria, Nan stood in front of a pier-glass, looking at herself with unseeing eyes. Her rich dress hung in soft folds about her, and its sombre colour intensified the whiteness of her face. Her eyes were widely opened, and they had a strained expression painful to see. Every now and then she looked in a bewildered way at the plain gold ring on her finger, and then at the hat and cloak on the ottoman beside her.

The door opened and a man entered abruptly. She threw up her head. "Do you usually enter a lady's room so?" she said, sharply.

"I beg your pardon; but really I did not know it was necessary for a husband to knock at his wife's door! The carriage is waiting to take us to the station. Are you ready?"

His eyes travelled over her person, and it satisfied him. She certainly was a most beautiful woman, the pose of her head was positively regal, and there was no nonsense about her. Outwardly, at all events, she was calm and self-possessed. In his experience—

and it had been varied—women and tears had been closely allied on such occasions. It was satisfactory to note her clear eyes. He hated scenes.

She turned again to the glass and fixed on her hat. He could not but admire the nonchalance with which she arranged the little curl on her forehead. Smiling delightedly he placed the cloak on her shoulders and fumbled over the fastening at her throat.

She stood indifferent, looking beyond him until his hand touched her cheek. She met his fixed gaze and started back with a look of disgust. "Thank you," she said, icily; "I can manage it."

In a moment he put his arms round her, and kissed her again and again.

She freed herself at last. "You must never do that again! Never!" she said, with blazing eyes.

He burst out laughing. "My dear Nan, you are magnificent! But," he added, significantly, "you must learn that a husband has privileges."

She looked into his eyes questionably, and as she looked an expression that was almost fear filled her own. "Richard," she said, impulsively, "I am all alone—I have no one—I mean I have never been married before! It is all so strange! I must get used to you! You will be kind to me?"

He only saw that the appeal made her face ten times more beautiful; her words conveyed no meaning to him. "Yes, yes, dear, of course. Come."

She hesitated for an instant, then placing the tips of her fingers on his arm, and looking straight before her, she went with him.

A Stupid Couple.

By RICHARD WARFIELD.

"WELL, Jim," I said, as I paced the deck with my brother, "if you find Mr. Ingham half as stupid as I find his wife I pity you. She is the most uninteresting person it has ever been my misfortune to meet with."

"She can't be more stupid than he is," laughed Jim. "He has not the ghost of an idea in his head. He's no company for me, I can tell you."

We were on a vessel homeward bound from Sydney, where we had been staying with our father's brother. There were very few passengers on board. Consequently we had become somewhat intimate with a Mr. and Mrs. Ingham, who had been introduced to us by the captain; for when at sea one is not very particular about the friends one makes. In a limited society one must not be too squeamish, or one is left out in the cold.

"I'll tell you what, Hetty," pursued my brother, "suppose you take Ingham in hand, and leave the fair Blanche to me? She's a pretty little woman enough, and I might get up a mild flirtation with her. It would relieve the monotony, and could do no harm. Ingham is too lazy to be jealous."

"I'm agreeable," I replied; "but don't go over far, Jim. You know Mrs. Vavasour always said you were dangerously fascinating. Don't trouble the silly creature's heart. Meanwhile, I'll see whether I can put a little life into her husband."

"Oh! my dear Mrs. Ingham," I heard Jim saying presently, as I sat a little way from them, reading a novel; "how can you talk so foolishly? I can assure you my sister and I should be dreadfully dull were it not for the companionship of yourself and your husband. We are so accustomed to mixing among a lot of people that we quite abhor the thought of ten minutes of our own exclusive society. We really regard you and Mr. Ingham as veritable godsends."

"It is very kind of you to tell me so," murmured the lady; "but I am certain your sister must think me frightfully stupid. She is

so bright and vivacious, so full of *chic*; and yet, oh! such a dear, sweet girl! I quite love her."

I left off reading, and began deliberately to listen. This gushing sentimentality was a new trait in Mrs. Ingham's character.

"Do you know, Mr. Marshall?—But there, how can you know?" she went on, after a slight pause, "I, too, at one time, was very fond of, I may say wickedly addicted to, society. Maurice and I lived in a perfect whirl of gaiety, but," and she heaved a gentle sigh, "time changeth everything. Could my friends of two years ago see faded little me now, they would throw up their hands and cry: 'Is it really you, Blanche? Impossible!'"

"How can you call yourself faded?" rebuked Jim, politely indignant, and irrelevantly, "What a pretty name Blanche is, it exactly suits you."

"Do you really like it, Mr. Marshall? It seems so girlish to me, and I am no longer young."

"A lady is never older than she looks," came the stereotyped reply; "and no one would take you for more than twenty."

"Oh! what sweet flattery," Mrs. Ingham simpered. "You have early learnt the art of making pretty speeches, Mr. Marshall. Ah! if only my husband talked as you do." Then she lowered her voice and said something I could not catch. But I had heard enough, and, thoroughly disgusted, I rose and walked away to the other end of the deck, my heart full of pity for the man who had such a mawkish, empty-headed woman for a wife. "No wonder Mr. Ingham appears stupid to Jim," I thought, "if he can find pleasure in listening to the fair Blanche's twaddle. Blanche indeed! Why, the name suits her to perfection." Thus soliloquising, I almost ran into Mr. Ingham's arms without seeing him.

"Pray don't apologise," he exclaimed, as I began murmuring some excuse for my awkwardness. "What a lovely evening it is," he added, gazing far out over the waves, with a dreamy look on his face. "I love the sea at any time, Miss Marshall, but the most on such an evening as this. At these times I never weary of it."

While he was speaking I noticed that Mr. Ingham had a pair of most expressive eyes, and was, besides, a handsome man. It was strange I had not observed it before.

"What caused him to marry that stupid doll?" I wondered.

"I hope my cigar is not annoying you, Miss Marshall?" he

pursued, as we strolled up and down; and as I was answering in the negative he proceeded carelessly, bestowing a rather scornful glance on his wife and Jim, whose inane laughter and frivolous chatter seemed to jar upon him, "Your brother and Blanche appear to get on splendidly together. It is a pity they will have to separate so soon."

"The best of friends have to part sometimes," I remarked, sagely. "But I trust we shall not see the last of you when we land, Mr. Ingham? Your wife and you must come to stay with us in Norfolk. We live there, you know."

"So your brother was telling me, the other day. It is most kind of you to offer us a visit to you; but, I fear, we must refuse the invitation. I have a great deal of business to occupy my time while I am in England."

"You are going to return to Australia, then?"

"Yes, certainly; we live there."

"Well, sis, and how did you get on with Ingham?" Jim asked, a couple of hours later. "Did you not find him dreadfully slow? I pitied you from my heart."

"Your pity was wasted, then. I found him excellent company; such a pleasant change after that idiotic wife of his."

Jim stared. "I think you must misunderstand her, Hetty," he said; "she and I got on first-rate; she's such a jolly little woman."

"What you see to admire in her, Jim," I retorted, "I cannot imagine. I wonder at your taste."

"Pooh!" he rejoined; "you women always depreciate one another."

As the days sped rapidly onward, I saw more and more of Mr. Ingham, and grew to like him immensely. We spent a great deal of time together. Mrs. Ingham quite monopolised my brother's society; so I—partly from a feeling of retaliation, partly because I really liked him—made much of her husband, devoting myself to him in a most shamelessly open manner.

"Miss Marshall and Maurice seem made for each other," I overheard her saying, sneeringly, one day to Jim. "What a pity my husband is not free, for then they might make a match of it."

I felt my face flush, but, fortunately, Mrs. Ingham was unaware of my propinquity, so I was spared the mortification of letting her know that her words annoyed me.

"If Ingham were free, you would be also, Blanche," my brother answered, in languishing accents; "and you know what that would mean to me."

The tone of this reply, more than the sentiment expressed, startled me. It told me that Jim, whom I had always considered impregnable to woman's wiles, was speaking seriously. His voice altogether lacked the inflection of airy compliment, of conventional badinage. Yes, there could be no doubt about it; this woman, of whom I had said to him, "Don't trouble the silly creature's heart;" this vacuous-minded, frivolous woman had by her infantile tricks and affectation of child-like simplicity thrown a spell over my brother, and made him believe that he was in love with her. To enliven the tedium of a journey—for in my ignorance I ascribed no other motive to her—she had trifled and flirted with him to the destruction of his peace of mind. I was filled with holy indignation and lofty scorn, and anathematised her mentally in no measured language. I also thought several hard things concerning my brother's gullibility. "Pride goeth before destruction," a wise man said; and my hour of humiliation was not far off.

It was very vexing, this discovery of mine, particularly as I had reason to know (having been told by Mr. Ingham during one of our quiet walks on deck) what a despicable person Blanche was. Of course he had not said so, in terse unvarnished English, for he always spoke most kindly of her; but I knew his character sufficiently well by this time to read between the lines of his conversation. Her extravagance was unbounded—she would waste money like water—this much I learnt from him incidentally. And then, ashamed of having admitted anything to the detriment of his wife, he added: "But she's a dear affectionate girl!"—"girl!" thought I—"and she can't help her love of pretty things."

We were now drawing near England; but a few days more and our voyage would be at an end. I was not sorry for this, for Jim danced attendance on Blanche everlastingly, and made no secret of his infatuation; and I gladly looked forward to the arrival of the time when their hourly intercourse must perforce be stopped. How I regretted having given Mr. Ingham that invitation to Norfolk; not that I should not be pleased to see *him*, but his wife—*never*!

Though everybody else on board the ship remarked and covertly discussed Jim's attentions to Mrs. Ingham, Maurice Ingham himself

seemed utterly oblivious of them. The husband and wife were now but seldom seen in each other's company, but to all appearance he did not miss her greatly. So long as she was happy and content he cared not how she spent her time, nor with whom. I decided in my own mind that theirs had been a marriage of convenience. Betwixt Blanche Ingham and myself there existed a kind of armed neutrality—a species of “let me alone and I'll not interfere with you” arrangement; none the less understood by each of us because it was tacitly expressed. My brother's mad folly was well-nigh inconceivable, but the siren should have her own way until we were safely landed on *terra firma*, when I would at once carry him off out of her clutches. Intermeddling at present would do no good.

Only on one occasion, when, exasperated by some more than usually sickening display of imbecility on his part, I lost my temper, did I venture to tell my brother a piece of my mind about his conduct. “If you *are* a fool, Jim,” I tartly exclaimed, “you need not take such elaborate pains to advertise your folly. You might have a little consideration for me. Recollect I am your sister, and people may think idiocy runs in the blood.”

“Poor little sister,” he laughed; “I'll be more careful.”

On our arrival in London, Jim quietly informed me that the Inghams were going to stay at the same hotel as ourselves.

“Blanche—Mrs. Ingham—asked me to recommend one to her,” he said. “She tells me Ingham is so very, very stupid about arranging where to put up, etc. I am glad they will be with us.”

“It is more than I am,” I crossly retorted. “How long do you wish to remain in town, Jim? I want to get home and rid of these people.”

“Why, Hetty,” he demanded, “what has come to you? It was only yesterday Blanche told me you had asked her husband to take her down home into Norfolk. What a changeable person you are.”

I did not know what to reply. “I must have been mad,” I declared, “or I should certainly never have invited them.”

Jim shrugged his shoulders, and walked away whistling.

That evening I was sitting in the vestibule of the hotel, very tired and nearly asleep, when the familiar tones of Mr. Ingham struck on my ear. Familiar, I say, and yet they sounded far differently from what I had previously ever heard them.

"Well, little woman," he said, "and how are you prospering? Has the faithful Jim forked out?"

Blanche Ingham—I knew it was she, though the two of them were as effectually concealed from me as I was from them—laughed merrily: a bright silvery laugh, not a bit like the everlasting giggle we had been favoured with on ship-board, but she never spoke, and they passed away into the distance. The circumstance did not make much impression on me at the time; I only felt a faint surprise that the Inghams should suddenly be on such easy terms together. I was destined to remember it vividly later on when—but I must not anticipate.

The following day I had a splitting, racking headache, and was quite too unwell to go with the Inghams and Jim for an excursion down the river, as had been arranged. I begged, however, that they would go without me. Quiet and rest were all I needed. After some hesitation they consented, though reluctantly. Blanche was especially solicitous about me, and entreated to be allowed to remain at home, but this I would not hear of. So off they went. In spite of his talked-of business, Maurice Ingham seemed to have nothing to do except amuse himself.

About 3 p.m. Mr. Ingham returned to the hotel with a note from Jim in pencil:—"DEAR HETTY,"—he had scribbled—"I have had an accident with the boat; and neither Ingham nor myself have sufficient loose coin to pay for the damage done. Kindly send my pocket-book by Ingham. I would come for it, but these precious boatmen seem afraid of letting me out of their sight.—Yours, JIM."

Jim always left his pocket-book in my care, so I ran upstairs to fetch it. There were notes in it to the value of £150. These I counted before Mr. Ingham, and then replaced them in the book. "I have no idea how much he'll require," I said; "you had better take the lot."

"Yes, perhaps I had," he answered. "I don't know the extent of the damage." Adding: "Well, I'll be off; you look very white and ill, Miss Marshall, you had better lie down." And he stooped and picked something from off the floor.

About seven o'clock Blanche Ingham and Jim came back together. Mr. Ingham was not with them. Jim appeared to be rather excited. Had I not known he was a most sparing drinker, I should have thought he had been partaking too freely of stimulants. The lady's

eyes shone and sparkled as I had never before seen them ; they seemed to me to emit somewhat of a triumphant glitter.

"Where is Ingham ?" Jim inquired.

"Here I am," replied a voice ; and Maurice Ingham descended the staircase into the hall.

I was just about to give words to my astonishment at his being in the hotel, when Jim said : "You've missed a treat, old man ; we've had a splendid time."

"I'm glad of it," returned Ingham, lightly ; "very glad."

I called Jim on one side presently, and asked him about the accident to the boat.

"Accident ? What accident ?" he queried, staring at me blankly. "You must be dreaming, Hetty ; there has been no accident."

It was now my turn to look astonished ; but an explanation quickly ensued, and I gave Jim an account of my afternoon's proceedings.

"No doubt Ingham intends all this for a joke," my brother cried, when I had finished ; "but it is a very poor one. I hope, Hetty, this will be a lesson to you to be more careful of my property in the future."

But on being questioned by Jim, Mr. Ingham disclaimed any knowledge whatever of the pocket-book. "You must have been asleep and dreaming, Miss Marshall," he gaily asserted. "Why, I have never seen you this afternoon. I left your brother and my wife because I did not feel very well, and came back to the hotel. Your story is too ridiculous."

"But do you mean to tell me, Mr. Ingham," I hotly exclaimed, "that I did not give you Jim's pocket-book—that you did not bring me a note ostensibly from him ?"

"Certainly I do, my dear Miss Marshall. Pray where is this wonderful note which I brought ?"

"I don't know ; I did not keep it." Then with sudden remembrance : "Did not I see you pick it up from the floor ?"

"Ah ! I thought so," he responded, sarcastically ; "of course, you did not keep the note ; it is not to be expected that you should, seeing that it was of no importance."

"I think it would be better if Miss Marshall were to confess the truth—that she has appropriated her brother's money to her own use," Mrs. Ingham now chimed in—oh ! so sweetly. "I am

sure Maurice will forgive her aspersions of himself for her brother's sake."

"My dearest Blanche," Mr. Ingham interposed, "please leave me to settle this most unpleasant business, and retire. You have your good name to think of: I do not care for you to be seen in the present company. It is not quite what you have been used to, darling."

Here Jim varied the proceedings by knocking Mr. Ingham down. A crowd of visitors, staying in the hotel, immediately gathered round us, while Mrs. Ingham fainted gracefully away.

Well, the upshot of it all was that as no one had seen Mr. Ingham in conversation with me during the afternoon, and as there was only my word against his, Jim was advised to let the matter drop—a thing he did with great reluctance.

But the worst had yet to come.

"I see it all now, Hetty," Jim bewailed to me. "I have been fooled by that fiend of a woman from the very first. Do you know, Hetty, I lent the creature £200 only this morning. She said her husband was a perfect brute to her, and begrudged her every sixpence she spent. She saw me give you the pocket-book to take care of, and they laid their plans accordingly. We have been taken in by a couple of sharpers, Hetty—duped, tricked, cheated."

"And we thought them so stupid, Jim. Do you remember?"

"I am not likely to forget it," my brother answered, bitterly. "Oh! bother it all," he continued; "I don't care a fig about the money, but the woman! I really liked her. I did, indeed!"

A Daughter of Babylon.

IN TWO PARTS.

By C. HORNBY.

PART ONE.

CHAPTER I.

MOTHER AND SON.

AN Italian sun was shining down on a village—town, I should say—in northern Italy: a pretty, picturesque little town, with narrow stone-paved streets and high houses; their green shutters closed to keep out the sun, while clothes and house linen of many and varied hues hung suspended on lines from the windows. Below in the streets it was cool and shady, with that damp, musty odour that told the sun never penetrated there. Above, the sky was one deep, cloudless blue vault, against which the house-tops rose with startling clearness; behind this little town of tall painted houses and whitewashed steeples, the steep wooded mountains rose until their topmost peaks seemed verily to touch the sky. So thickly were their sides covered by olive trees that it appeared as though one solitary bush had grown and grown until its branches had spread over everything near and far.

Here and there stood a white or yellow villa—a land-mark for the eye—on which the sun danced and glittered, while the stone grey of the cottages could just be seen amongst the trees. Right down, close to the water's edge, the houses clustered, not one quite distinguishable from another in the sunlight, for all seemed one mass of vivid colouring enhanced by the brilliant blue of the sea, upon which the sun made little twinkling golden points of light. It was a very pretty scene—a harmony in green and blue, dashed with streaks of vivid white and yellow—while here and there a bit of red or blue fluttered from the windows and caught the eye.

On the shore groups of noisy little dark-haired children gambolled like so many monkeys in the sun, their curly heads uncovered, and their dirty little feet bare and sunburnt. Red-capped fishermen lounged beneath the shade of their boats; while women, with red handkerchiefs over their heads, sat before the curious round lace

pillows, their deft brown fingers quickly lacing and interlacing the fine white threads. Heavy cumbrous fishing-boats came in and put out to sea again, their brown lateen sails flapping in the breeze; while every now and then a white-winged English cutter would flash into sight and disappear. It was all so bright, so brilliant; everything spoke of life, of happiness, of gaiety; not one dark speck showed anywhere beneath the shimmering glory of that hot southern sun.

It was a scene to sink into one's memory, never to be forgotten—a scene of idleness, of rest, of contentment to some. It offered a veritable haven of rest to anyone who, tired of the busy hum of the outside world, had sought that sunny little Italian town on the shore of the Mediterranean.

Not many foreigners had penetrated Rapallo; you seldom saw the artist with his camp-stool and sketching-block there; nor the untidy, slovenly Englishman abroad with his alpenstock and travelling camera. No, they had yet to learn that such a place existed; and, as yet, had left no trails behind them in the shape of burnt wood and newspaper. A few Germans lived in the villas around; and half-a-dozen invalids or so came and went to the two hotels.

Not very far up a steep and stoney path, shaded on either side by crooked and gnarled olives, two people stood. They were English—the one a lady, the other a man. The lady sat supported by cushions in a wicker bath-chair with a long handle attached; she was small, fair, faded looking, and evidently an invalid. The lady had drawn up the thick white veil from over her face, and was gazing at the view which opened out before her with evident admiration.

"It is very beautiful, Norrys," the lady said, heaving a sigh as she continued to gaze over the calm shining surface of the water, dotted everywhere with brown specks and white bits of sail.

"I am so glad you like it, mother," answered her son; but he was not looking at the sea, nor the dark-green mountains, but at the slight flush that had risen on his mother's cheek, and an expression full of tender regard filled his eyes for a moment.

Norrys Dorian looked older than his seven-and-twenty years; much in the same way as his mother appeared ridiculously under her five-and-fifty, for although her face was worn and faded looking, her light golden hair and chintz-like colouring took considerably away from her age. His dark, stern, powerful face bore the stamp of five-and-thirty; there was nothing young about it. The hard, firm, well-

cut lips, the square resolute jaw, the straight even features, and the dark, deep, unflinchable grey eyes, that looked at you with a singularly grave and steady expression, shaded by their heavy lashes and straight black brows, bore the stamp of developed manhood. His forehead was broad and high, from which the closely-cut, dark-brown hair grew crisply back.

At first sight it was far from being a pleasing physiognomy, but on looking more closely one could not help being struck with it. It was a powerful face, full of a deep, unreadable character, not intellectually clever, perhaps grand, rather, with a sort of rugged grandness, that when once seen could not be lightly forgotten; then the tall, well-built figure struck one too, particularly the broad chest and shoulders, as he walked beside the bath-chair or pulled it up the steep paths. A passer-by might have been surprised to see how his face altered, how it lighted up as he gazed down at the faded invalid, how the grey eyes smiled a singularly sweet smile, and the lips relaxed from their hard lines; then he looked young again—the smile was so boyish, so full of countless possibilities.

“I think we had better be going back now,” the lady said, after a silence of a few minutes. “The sun sinks so rapidly here, and we are some way from the hotel.” She settled herself back among the cushions and pulled the travelling-rug up over her knees, while Dorian stooped to tuck it in around her.

“You are quite comfortable?” he asked, bending over her. “Your pillows are quite right?”

“I think you might alter them a little, Norrys; push them further down. Ah! mind my hair; you are so careless.” Her tone sunk to a slight peevishness, that made the young man’s brows contract sharply, annoyed at his own clumsiness.

“Is that better?” he said, as he arranged them, his large strong hands fingering her shawl and veil as tenderly as a woman’s.

“Yes, that will do; don’t jolt me, Norrys, these stones do shake me so dreadfully.”

Mrs. Dorian leant back in her chair, and closed her eyes with a tired sigh; the flush had faded from her cheek. As they descended beneath the chill, grey gloom of the olives she shivered a little.

For some time neither spoke, when suddenly Mrs. Dorian opened the conversation by exclaiming: “Oh! Norrys, did you notice those ill-bred Germans at the table to-day? Some more have arrived.

I shall really have to lunch and dine in my own room if they continue staying here; their voices go right through one. Why is it that they should be such a coarse and vulgar race?—such manners as they have too!”

“No, mother, I did not notice them particularly, but Signor Crispi told me to-day that some English were coming shortly. Let’s hope they will be respectable specimens of their country, and prove nice companions for you.”

“Indeed, I hope they will; but you can never tell what sort of people you may meet abroad, there is such a lack of society here, the people all seem so very second-rate. Really, Norrys, I wish for your sake that some more interesting people would come. You must find it so very dull, there is no occupation for young men here at all, I don’t believe.”

“Don’t worry about me, little mother, but I shall be glad for your sake if these fresh arrivals do turn out favourably; as for me, why I don’t care sixpence who comes or who goes. Are you so very dull here, dear? Would you prefer to go home—to London for instance?” Norrys stopped for a second and looked back anxiously at his mother.

“London! heaven forbid! do you want to kill me that you suggest such a thing? Certainly the fogs would soon relieve you of me. Why are you stopping? It is so damp and chilly beneath these horrible olives.”

Dorian moved on; then he remarked: “But you say you are dull here.”

“So I am dull, deadly dull; I should be dull anywhere—even in London—I could not go out, I could not entertain; life would be misery—in the world and yet out of it. No, it is not to be thought of. I have done with England. How would you like to live in a back street, or in a miserable little lodging at Richmond or Norwood, or one of those places? It was different when your father was alive, but now it would be unbearable. We must move on to Florence soon, or Venice, I don’t care which,” her voice sharpened with a note of pain as she spoke, and she shifted about uneasily in her chair.

Norrys made no reply, and his mother went on: “No, I shall never go back now, even if I were as rich as Cræsus himself. I could never put up with the stiffness, the conventionality of English life. I shall die in Italy. When I am dead it will be time enough for you to think of going home. You are your uncle’s heir, and will,

I daresay, be able to enjoy yourself on four or five thousand a year ; but until then—until I free you—Norrrys, you must put up with the dullness, with the deadly monotony of such an existence as we are now leading."

Dorian had not interrupted her once, but his face had grown harder and sterner as she went on, and the lines around his lips deepened with pain. "Have I ever complained—have I ever asked you to go home?" he said, as she finished speaking. "Mother, surely you must know that I only care to be where you are ; that I hate, loathe society, and all its shallowness and falseness. I tell you I am contented ; why won't you believe me, darling ? It makes me miserable to have you talk like that. Oh ! mother, why should I want you to die ?"

He stopped again, an expression of deep tenderness softening his face, but Mrs. Dorian frowned impatiently : "Nonsense, nonsense, Norrrys ; you cared for gaiety pretty much, I fancy, before that wretched little Nell Devereux changed you so completely. You will marry, of course, when your time comes, and take your proper place in society. Why should you be different to other young men ? No, no, it is not natural ;" then with a complete change of tone : "Oh, Norrrys dear, what should I do without you ; you are very, very good to your troublesome old mother, my dear."

"Good, don't call it goodness, I should be a brute, indeed, if I left you," and with knitted brows Dorian walked quickly on.

Presently, Mrs. Dorian spoke again, and her tone was full of all its old peevishness : "Norrrys, why are you for ever going to that Casino ? I am sure it must be a horribly low sort of a place, and you must spend a fortune. If you *must* gamble, why on earth can't you go to Monte Carlo, and at least do it in a gentlemanly way ?"

A dark flush rose through Dorian's tanned skin, and his brows contracted sharply together, but his voice did not alter as he replied : "I don't gamble, and I have no wish to go to Monte Carlo, thank you, mother ; but heaven knows a fellow must spend his time somewhere." He spoke impatiently, and for the moment lost all control of his voice.

"Then why do you not go into the smoking-room and try to be a little sociable ?" returned Mrs. Dorian.

"Because I can't afford to make myself sociable to unsociable people ; and, besides, I already spend a fortune in tobacco. At

least at the Casino you stand a chance of winning a few sous, while in the smoking-room you only lose your temper ; and, besides, I can't stand spouting German for two mortal hours."

"Well, there is no need to get into a temper, Norrrys. I am sure I don't care where you go, but you might think of me a little."

She had just said, what would she do without him, and now she was blaming him. Dorian felt the injustice of her words keenly, but he was too well accustomed to her various moods and tempers to take much notice of them.

"If you object so strongly, mother, I will leave off going," he said gently. But Mrs. Dorian only shrugged her shoulders carelessly, and bade him be quick, as it was growing cold. She was silent for some time, and Norrrys thought she had quite forgotten their previous conversation, so her next remark surprised him.

"I wonder whether you still think and worry yourself about that wretched little Nell," she began, but stopped short, as her chair suddenly jolted violently. "Oh, do be more careful, Norrrys ; anybody so utterly careless as you——"

Dorian paused, re-arranged her pillows, and then said in a voice so low and stern, that she was almost startled, "It would be better if you never mentioned that name to me again. I have done with it. Be satisfied mother, there is no need for you to be jealous of her, or of anyone indeed, but—but I would rather not talk of it, that's all."

The chair moved on, but Mrs. Dorian continued pettishly, "Oh ! it is all very well, but you will marry, of course, Norrrys."

"No, I shall not. Why should I ? " I am not of the marrying sort."

"Nonsense," his mother broke in sharply, "nonsense, of course you will ; all young men say the same until they do."

"Well ! if I do, which seems to me very unlikely, it shall never alter me towards you, little mother ; come now, let's leave the subject, please," and in spite of her frown, Dorian bent down and kissed the faded cheek.

That evening after Dorian had seen his mother comfortably settled for the night, and placed the candle and matches on the small table beside her bed, he went out and walked along the quiet, moon-lit streets in the direction of the shore ; nobody knew when he came in, but it was long after midnight before his head touched the pillow.

The next day being Sunday, Mrs. Dorian stayed in her room

longer than usual. "It depresses me to go to church here," she said. "Church in a room seems so out of place, and besides, the music jars on my nerves fearfully."

So after reading to her for some time, Dorian put down the book, and said he was going out, "That is if you don't want me," he added.

"You are not going to church, then, Norrrys, I suppose?" enquired Mrs. Dorian. "What will people think? Of course they know it is my bad health that keeps me away, but you—you might go, Norrrys."

"My dear mother, let people think what they choose; they may think I am a Mahommedan if they like, or a Buddhist, anything that pleases them, I don't care a sixpence for them or their thoughts." Norrrys laughed, but Mrs. Dorian looked aggrieved.

"Norrrys, how can you entertain such profane ideas? You might go and sit in your chair, for the look of things, anyhow."

"To me it would seem more profane—far more hypocritical. No, I cannot do that, even to please you!" Dorian replied, "and besides, why should I care what people think of me, what difference can it make?" He rose from his seat, and crossed the room to the window; outside the green shutters, which were half open, the sun shone and played upon the blue water; there was a hum of children's voices in the still air, and now and then the tinkling of bells as the mule carts went by. Norrrys watched the tiny, lazy waves as they lapped gently on the shore, and then again receded, the stones and seaweed at the bottom being plainly visible through the clear, deep water. His mother's words angered him, he was conscious of feeling an uncontrollable irritation. "If I can't do anything for you, mother, I shall go out," he repeated, going towards the door.

"Yes, you had better," was the ungracious reply, "You seem in an exceedingly bad temper; I hope the fresh air will do you good; at present you can hardly be called a cheerful companion for an invalid," and Mrs. Dorian took up her book with a determined air. Norrrys turned abruptly and left the room, and taking his cap and stick, he went out, whistling to the black retriever that belonged to the hotel to follow him.

Crossing the bridge, he set out along the hard, white "Cornichi Road," which wound for miles and miles around the coast. The day was beautiful, clear and bright, and the air bracing and exhilarating, the sea and sky both a deep unchanging cobalt. How long he walked without looking to right or left he did not know, when raising his eyes

for a moment, tired of seeing nothing but the dusty road and his tan leather shoes, he perceived that just in front of him lay a cluster of houses, from the midst of which the usual tall white steeple rose.

It was only another little town, the exact counterpart of that he had just left. As he entered the narrow street he passed the entrance of the church. For a minute Dorian paused, his mother had wanted him to go to church. Why should he not look in? He had been once inside a Roman Catholic Church in London, and had come away deeply impressed with the beauty of the music. Yes, he would go now, the sun was hot, and it looked cool and shady inside. So, without giving the matter a second thought, Norrys entered. The interior was large, and at first sight gloomy, but on looking closer Dorian saw that the walls were gaudily frescoed. Service was going on, or at least Norrys supposed that it was, as the organ was sending forth a cascade of sound, while some peasants were kneeling, others standing. Near the door some ragged children were busily playing at marbles; he could not help being amused at the strangeness of the scene, but he went and sat down in one of the chairs, and waited for what might happen.

Perhaps it was the sound of the organ which screamed and thundered alternately, perhaps the slow, monotonous drawlings of the priests' voices, for before Norrys knew what he was doing, his head began to nod and he was asleep. When he opened his eyes nobody seemed the wiser, the organ had stopped, and all the congregation had dispersed, only two or three black robed friars were moving about, who passed him with a respectful "*Buon siorno, signore.*" Norrys roused himself, refreshed after his snooze, with a half-amused, half-sarcastic smile playing round his lips.

"I have been to church after all," he thought, "and feel decidedly better than I do after most services.

So he left his cool retreat, and went out into the sunshine once more. He almost wished that he was not going back to the hotel, he disliked the *table d'hôte*, and the people bored him more than the food. He hurried his footsteps as he neared Rapallo, and reached the hotel in time to partake of a cup of afternoon tea.

"Why, where have you been all the afternoon, Norrys?" said Mrs. Dorian, almost before he had opened the door. "I have been wretchedly dull all by myself. I suppose you have been at that disgusting Casino

—really you might make a difference on a Sunday, although you are abroad.”

Dorian stifled the quick exclamation that rose to his lips, as he always did when with his mother. She rarely guessed what lay behind his quiet expressionless face.

“Wrong, again, mother,” he said lightly. “You have jumped to a false conclusion, I have not been near the Casino, but have been walking nearly the whole time since I left you—except for about fifteen minutes which I spent inside a church.”

“A church, Norrys?” questioned Mrs. Dorian.

“Yes! a Roman Catholic Church. It was cool inside, and I passed a very pleasant quarter of an hour, and had a delicious snooze.”

“Oh! No rys, why could you not have gone to a church here? What a waste of time.”

“I hope you have not been very dull, little mother,” he continued, bending his dark head, and dropping a light kiss on her forehead, a look of great tenderness lighting up his face.

“Oh! Norrys,” exclaimed Mrs. Dorian suddenly, “you have had no lunch. Won’t you have something now? Tea is nothing. Shall I ring and tell the waiter to make you some sandwiches?” For the minute she seemed full of care and thought for him; perhaps his kiss had touched her, or the gentle clasp of his hands over hers.

“No, thank you, mother, I can exist quite well until dinner-time. Are you sure you have not been dull?”

“Dull! Well, one is always that here, more or less, but that book is very interesting; you must read it. Tell me, what did you see out?”

“See? Oh, the same things, the sea, the sky, the trees; I saw nothing else that particularly took my fancy.”

Dorian left the vicinity of the sofa, and crossed over to the window, as he invariably did whenever he entered his mother’s room; perhaps the ceaseless ripple of the waves attracted him, or the fleeting shadows that chased each other down the mountain sides, or the hum of voices in the still air, now and then varied by the hoot or cry of some mule driver. Just now the water seemed like burnished gold, for the sun was sinking slowly, tinging the hill-tops with palest salmon, and deepening the shadows to indigo and purple. The sea, where the sun had left it, gleamed black as ebony, reflecting the white house-tops vividly on its glassy surface.

A sense of sadness, of depression, took possession of the young man

as he remained standing at the window. Would nothing break the peaceful stillness, nothing more pronounced than those childish voices and tinkling bells? What a torpid life he led, like a pond that gets daily more overgrown with dead leaves and rushes; this sense of inactivity, this lazy nothingness was intolerable. Could he do nothing to shake it off? His life went on day after day as regularly, with as much deadly monotony as those sleepy little waves, except when a storm would lash them into foam and give them strength to beat against and quarrel with the stones, until the wind ceased and it was calm again.

Dorian thought of his Oxford days, they seemed centuries old to him now; and yet only a few years had passed since he had left. He had never done more than distinguish himself in a small way, either in mathematics, or at cricket. Neither had he made any especial mark in classics, or done anything out of the way on the river. But he had played cricket as a good "all round" man, pulled an oar in his college boat, and had passed creditably in athletics, although he had never "pulled off" the long jump or run in first "at the final," still he had done as well as most men, and had been termed a good sort of fellow; a genius he had never been, but then genius is not appreciated at Oxford, except by other geniuses, and Norrrys had made few friends among them.

He had been sorry to leave on the whole, to say good-bye to it all, yet he had never taken the trouble to keep up with old chums, and chums are for the most part very well willing to wait for you to make the first move towards renewing old friendships. On leaving Oxford Dorian had accompanied his mother abroad almost immediately; he had never known his father, and until the last few years could barely claim an acquaintance with his mother. But that was all very quickly changed. Mrs. Dorian had always been more or less of an invalid, but lately she had nearly collapsed altogether, and had told Dorian in so many words that she could not, and what was more, would not do without him.

"I have plenty to keep us both as long as we don't run into expense," she had said the day after he returned from Oxford. "We will go and live abroad. I have no one but you Norrrys, surely you won't leave me?" Those few words had done it: Dorian dismissed all thoughts he might have entertained of his own prospects, and made up his mind to devote himself wholly and solely to his mother.

It was an easy life that the mother and son led, travelling by slow stages from one place to another, mostly away from the fashionable throng, for Nice and Mentone were too expensive, Florence was cold, and Venice horrid in the winter, so the invalid declared. Rome was tried for one season, but there Mrs. Dorian met numerous old friends, so she left, because old friends entail expeditions, theatres and sight seeing, and Mrs. Dorian's purse, although it was by no means empty, had a limit.

So the mother and son left Rome, spent a winter in Naples, then went south to Cairo, and from there to Algiers, and then back again to the shores of the Mediterranean, until Mrs. Dorian's health had pinned her, whether she would or no, in the tiny Italian town where we now find them, beneath the shelter of the Apennines and under the hot rays of the southern sun. At first it was well enough, the scenery lovely, the climate exquisite, and the people strange and picturesque. But after a bit it began to pall; Mrs. Dorian had grumbled at Nice because of the expense, shivered at Florence, and complained of the smells at Venice, but here there was nothing to complain of, and nothing to do, nor anyone to speak to, yet there was no getting away. Mrs. Dorian got weaker, not stronger, as the winter advanced, and at the same time became so peevish, irritable and discontented, that even Norrys' patience was tried to the uttermost. It was worse for him than for her; it was part of her existence to sit back in the bath chair, smothered in cushions, or to lie languidly on the lounge, skimming through the last new novel; but it was not part of his life to move around the mountain paths, or to sit on the iron seat outside the hotel and smoke his cigar, without a soul to speak to, nothing—absolutely nothing—to do to while away his time.

When Norrys found that this sleepy little place held a Casino, his delight was unbounded. Immediately after dinner he started forth and entered the wooden building, but his pleasure was somewhat damped to see only a few dark-browed dirty Italians, lazily drinking their "chianti" beside the round tables and a few shuffling their cards, stopping every now and then to sip their wine, or quarrel and gesticulate over the latest bit of scandal; but after a while Norrys' patience was rewarded in the shape of two small wiry suspicious looking men who said they were French, but who spoke a doubtful lingo between themselves, and curious English to Norrys.

After a while some rather decent-looking Italians appeared on the

scene, and somehow Norrys contrived to make the hours pass and to lose a considerable quantity of his paper money. But while it lasted it was exciting, because the Frenchmen continually came to blows, and the Italians scowled darkly, as they flung their brigand-like cloaks over their shoulders, gesticulating and lifting their eyebrows, until a smile curved Norrys' lips and he walked home beneath the starlight, speculating and musing over what he had seen, and more often what he had lost. But to his mother he seldom complained, and so the days drifted into weeks, and the weeks into months, while Mrs. Dorian sometimes got weaker, sometimes stronger, but never really regained much strength.

"Shall I read to you mother?" Dorian said at last, turning round from the window, for he had watched the sun sink and the mountains lose themselves in shadow.

"Yes, I wish you would, but you had better ring for the lights first." Norrys did so, and then seated himself beside the sofa and took up the book. He did not read well, for he ran on too quickly very often, causing Mrs. Dorian to sigh painfully and put on an aggrieved expression, but he had a beautiful voice, low and mellow, and full of feeling, that rose and vibrated, as the story grew in interest, and sunk until it became inexpressibly tender, bringing tears to Mrs. Dorian's eyes by its pathos alone.

"I wish you would read more quietly Norrys," she often said. "People might think to hear you, that you were rehearsing a part." Then Dorian would modulate his tones, until he saw that his mother had dropped asleep, when he would put down the book and steal noiselessly from the room. To-day he read on until the dinner bell rung, and as he got up and closed the book, Mrs. Dorian did not hear the stifled sigh, or note the tired whiteness of his strong face, for sometimes Dorian felt that even his mother did not satisfy him, much as she was to him. True he battled against the morbid depression that took such strong possession of him from time to time, but he could not always drive it away, and to-night he felt it with double force.

CHAPTER II.

A CHANCE ACQUAINTANCE.

THERE is a picturesque poverty about Italy that few places can rival. Everything seems in a state of decay or collapse; the very walls that skirt the road-side are partly in ruins, tumbled down and covered with ivy, that look as though centuries had passed since the hand of man sought to train their trailing, clinging stems or disentangle the thick masses. Yet, poor as the peasants undoubtedly are, they do not seem to resent their poverty, they accept it as an accomplished fact, and bask contentedly enough beneath the rays of the hot sun, chatting and laughing happily to each other, their fingers busily employed the while either making lace or weaving thread. Beggars are known to be a great pest in Italy, though it is not so much their poverty that makes them beg but habit—a second nature that comes as naturally to them as their lace-making.

Dorian, in his long solitary tramps, noted often with surprise the utter poverty of some of the cottages, that is to say, the inside, for outside the walls were often fancifully and gaudily painted with figures of saints and patriots.

Then the vineyards are a feature in themselves alone. It is curious to note how every little plot of spare ground is seized upon and cultivated. The cottages are surrounded by vines—in winter nothing more than bare poles and twigs; but in summer a luxuriant growth of green, from which the black grapes hang, their dark green foliage contrasting well with the lighter and greyer green of the olives.

The walks around Rapallo were lovely and numerous; and Dorian spent a good deal of his time on foot alone, sometimes reaching such a height that he could see the distant coast of France, where Nice and San Remo lay, the snow-capped peaks of the Apennines, and the blue of the Mediterranean stretching for miles away into distance.

Mrs. Dorian was not so well as usual to-day—even the faint jolting of her chair tried her—so after seeing her comfortably settled on the sofa, Norrys started forth to scour the neighbourhood, his four-footed friend trotting along contentedly before him. "Well, old fellow, haven't you got anybody to speak to either," Dorian said, giving the shaggy head a pat. "No matter, we will enjoy ourselves in our own way." And so master and dog tramped on, until the

little town disappeared behind them and the olive trees arched over their heads.

For an hour Dorian walked on, now mounting up some steep cobbled stone pathway, now crossing one of the rough bridges, sometimes passing a house or chapel, but still going higher and higher, meeting nobody, except a brown-robed friar or two, and some little ragged children. Suddenly Dorian heard voices through the still air, and now and then a laugh rang out, but as yet he could see no one. Just, however, as he was thinking of turning back—for already it was growing chilly beneath the trees—somebody came quickly running up the path behind him, and a voice, distinctly English, said: "Could you tell me if this path leads down to Rapallo, we have quite lost our way, I am afraid?"

Dorian turned round, and saw a tall, neatly-dressed girl standing before him, a sailor hat and some dark curly hair surmounting a slightly flushed and wholly pretty face.

"Yes, this path leads straight to Rapallo," he replied, lifting his cap slightly as he spoke. "You cannot possibly miss your way."

"Oh, thanks so much, I think it must be very late, indeed, but these paths are so perplexing." She smiled half shyly and would have turned back, but Dorian took out his watch, and just at that minute another figure turned the corner and came hurriedly towards them.

"Oh, Vere, there you are! I was beginning to think you were quite lost," began the girl, and then she stopped on seeing Dorian's tall form. It was on the tip of her tongue to say, "Who on earth are you?" but Katherine Farnham only stared for a moment, and then smiled as she came quickly forward.

"It is not quite half-past four," Dorian said, turning to the girl whose name was Vere. "You will have plenty of time to get back before sunset, I should think."

"Yes, thank you," she returned; but Miss Farnham put in quickly, "I am so glad we met you; I have been quite longing to know the time, and my Italian is far too weak to allow me to ask. We only came last night. Is it very far back to the hotel, I wonder? We are staying at the Rapallo Hotel."

She seemed anxious to give and receive information, so Dorian, who was not a little sick of his own company, smiled politely, and said he was going back to that hotel also. Might he act as guide?

Miss Farnham declared herself delighted ; and presently Norrrys found himself talking away with these two English girls as though he had known them for years.

"I think it is so pretty here, but oh ! so very quiet ; don't you ?" questioned Katherine Farnham, as they walked down the stony path. "My cousin, Miss Lorimer, declares she likes it, but I must confess I do not. Why, there is nothing, absolutely nothing, to do. Are you staying at our hotel ? And are there many people there ?"

Miss Farnham was never at a loss for conversation, and Dorian let her talk on, rather glad, on the whole, to be saved the trouble of talking. The path being narrow, there was but room for two to walk abreast, so Miss Lorimer was forced to walk a little behind.

Dorian hardly ever noticed what women were like unless they very particularly struck him. Katherine Farnham had attracted him more than her cousin. She was a striking looking girl in every sense of the word, with her tall graceful figure, bright golden hair, and deep blue eyes. Vere Lorimer, with her more delicate, and to a close observer, far sweeter face, paled considerably beside hers ; and, perhaps, Dorian hardly knew that she had eyes at all, although he most certainly knew that Miss Farnham's eyes were blue and very pretty. Vere Lorimer was a slender, rather delicate-looking girl, without any real claim to good looks, yet hers was a singularly sweet face, it still retained a good deal of its child-like purity, and the large grey eyes were frank and steady ; altogether there was something—an undefinable something—about her that one might look for in vain in her cousin's more beautiful, but soulless, face.

"Yes, I am glad that you and your mother—you said something about a mother, I think—are staying here. Is she not very dull ? There seems absolutely nothing to do, but walk. I wish there were more people here," rattled on Miss Farnham in her quick, bright, if rather hard, tones. "Now, at least, we shall be able to talk across the dinner-table, shall we not ?"

Dorian had always told himself that he did not care for the society of women, not that he was a woman hater, he simply did not court their society ; perhaps, if the truth might be guessed, he distrusted them, because he had been once deceived he feared to be deceived again, yet he did not resent Katherine Farnham's lively talk ; to his surprise he found that he rather liked it, and felt glad that there would be something to go to the table-d'hôte for, somebody to talk

with, a fresh face to see; and then Katherine Farnham was pretty, almost lovely. He looked down at her as they walked along, noted the bright shining gold of her hair, the clear blue eyes, the dazzling purity of her complexion, saw the sparkle of the small white teeth, and the red mobile lips as they parted, closed and curved with each varying expression. Once or twice Katherine Farnham looked up and met Norrys' steady earnest gaze, and the prettiest colour imaginable flitted over her cheek.

Dorian would not, and did not, confess to himself that he was sorry when they entered the hotel, and with a smile and a nod both girls left him.

"Well, mother," he said, as he walked into her room; "perhaps you will not be so dull now, for I have just met a very charming young lady who is staying here."

To be concluded in the next Number.

Early Days of Carmen Sylva.

(QUEEN OF ROUMANIA.)

By SARAH CATHERINE BUDD.

Author of "MOZART," "HAYDN," etc., etc.

ON Friday the 9th of December, 1843, just as the bells of Neuwied, according to an old custom, were ringing for prayers at twelve o'clock, Carmen Sylva—the poetess queen—was born.

Her father—Prince Herman, who was born in 1814—sprang from the old and illustrious house of Wied, and was one of the most distinguished men of his time; indeed, he was a worthy son of the long line of illustrious ancestors—a man of great culture and vast intellectual powers. He had a speculative turn of mind also, and pondered much on the mysterious problems of human life. He was the author of a rather mystic book under the title of "The Unconscious Life of the Soul and the Manifestations of God."

In 1842 Prince Herman married the young and beautiful Marie

of Nassau, who proved herself eminently fitted for her position as princess, wife, and mother.

The infant princess was named Elizabeth, after her two god-mothers—Queen Elizabeth of Prussia, wife of Frederick William the Fourth; and the Grand Duchess Elizabeth of Prussia, then a bride of the Duke of Nassau.

As years passed on another child was added to the princely group. In August 1845 Prince William was born; and on the second of November 1850 Prince Otto, the youngest and last child, was born, and this completed the little family. The intense joy with which little Otto was welcomed soon passed away, for the beautiful boy was born with an incurable disease, from which he suffered untold agonies for the twelve short years of his life.

His was a very remarkable character. He accepted the pain of his lot like a martyr and without a murmur. He had a strong, clear intellect and great judgment. The aim of his short life was to hide his sufferings, as far as it was possible, that he might not add to the anxieties of those around him; and "till his last day he was unceasingly trying to improve his heart and mind." He knew for long that death could not be far away, and he looked wistfully towards it as to a deliverer and a friend, and yet in full submission to the Divine will, for he was very early ripe for Heaven. Prince Otto was the pet of all, and on the days when his sufferings were not so acute, "joy reigned in the house."

His mother was his unwearying nurse, his nearest friend, who shared every thought with him; and with wonderful power and resignation "comforted him with thoughts of his release."

Oh! ye mothers, think of that! Think of this patient, noble mother, putting aside the thought of what the agony would be to her when she should see his face no more, and yet "comforting him with thoughts of his release."

The home at Neuwied, so rich in love and faith, was clouded with suffering, for Prince Herman was often exceedingly ill. He had contracted a chill while bathing, in his earlier years, and this had produced a disease which was a "trouble to him all his life, and was the cause of his early death."

The Princess Elizabeth passionately loved her home and her people; and the expression of her feelings came out in poetry as naturally as does a lark's song when he soars into the skies. When

only nine years old she wrote verses, and at sixteen she began to write her poems regularly in a book. Her two homes were calculated to foster poetry and all dreamy fancies. The winter months were always spent by the family at the palace of Neuwied, where the Princess Elizabeth was born. From the lofty windows of the saloon one can follow the course of the Rhine, with its grand chain of mountains; and when the sun sets in glory and is reflected in the waters, the scene is a vision of beauty.

There is a park behind the palace stretching along the Rhine to the mouth of the River Wied, and there are lovely old avenues and glades. But it was their summer residence—the castle of Monrepos—so especially dear to Carmen Sylva. The castle is built on the ridge of a hill, amongst mountains, with the beautiful valley of Neuwied stretched at one's feet; and the Rhine flowing on its way, with little villages dotted about on its banks; and further off the frowning fortress of Ehrenbreitstein, and the houses and towers of Coblenz. The most magnificent beech woods adjoin the castle—real forests, indeed, whose mighty trees cast a green gloom everywhere—and well-kept paths lead for miles through these fine woods and shady valleys. Here the young Princess could breathe freely, here was liberty, here was home.

When the skies were blue and there was only a little sighing of the wind in the topmost branches of the trees, and the air was full of the slumberous hum of insects, then Nature spoke to the young girl in soft, persuasive accents, having much to whisper in a poet's ear. And when wild storms were raging the Princess would sally forth with her three great St. Bernards, and enjoy the howling of the wind and the creaking of the branches. She understood what the wind was saying, she understood the language of the forest, and birds, and air, and storm, and sunshine, had a special message for her.

About this time she wrote an exquisite little poem called "Storm in a Forest," translated by Sir Edwin Arnold, beginning with—

" There roars from the forest
A symphony wild;
The wind drives before it,
The tempest clouds piled."

The young Princess Elizabeth was a very remarkable girl, and

needed very judicious management—this she had, and also the most devoted loving care from both her parents.

For six years the Princess had a governess, named Fräulein Jossé, who filled her position with faithfulness and judgment. When she left Neuwied no other governess was engaged. From this time—1858 to 1860—a tutor superintended her studies.

Herr Sauerwein was a man of deep learning and especially gifted in languages. This delighted the young girl, for she was particularly fond of acquiring foreign languages. Herr Sauerwein had lived in England for a long time, and was a great admirer of its country, history, and laws. He gave his lessons in English, and English history was the favourite study.

At this time the young Princess was a lovely girl, with a refined spiritual expression, and she was called “The Princess of the Wild Rose.”

A long visit paid by the Princess Sophie of Nassau, was a great pleasure to all at Neuwied. This Princess was a younger sister of the Princess of Wied, and was engaged to the Duke of Ostgothland, now the reigning King of Sweden.

In 1859 the first parting came to the little family at Neuwied. Prince William was sent to Basle to study at the college, and he lived in the house of Professor Gelzer. In one of the Princess's letters she says, “They were wonderful days when Professor Gelzer was here. I cannot tell you how interesting they were. What conversations there were after tea, more interesting than all those of the rest of the year put together.”

In the summer of 1860 the young Princess was confirmed. Her mother had been trying to prepare her for this in the winter, and often when the wind was moaning round the palace, and the Princess of Wied was sitting by the suffering bed of her beloved little Otto, she would be writing questions for her daughter to work out on the morrow.

The ceremony took place at Monrepos, all the sponsors of the Princess with the immediate relatives and friends being present. After this, days and years of sorrow followed. The Prince of Wied was nearly always in a state of suffering, and little Otto in an agony of pain, so that his mother could scarcely leave his bedside.

With a mother's devoted love the Princess arranged that her daughter should accept an invitation of the Queen of Prussia, and go to Berlin.

"The house is too quiet, the bird has outgrown its cage," said the anxious mother.

Concerning this visit to Berlin, the Princess Elizabeth writes to her brother; "Oh! it is hard, very hard; the first absence from home, the first separation from mamma." However, she went, and was petted by Queen Augusta and her Court. Such an unsophisticated princess was never before seen in Berlin, and she was the subject of some little astonishment. She felt more at home in the family of the Princess Hohenzollern, who were spending the winter in Berlin. In speaking of this in later years she exclaimed, "Had I only had an idea of all this when I so enthusiastically admired the mother (her husband's mother) at Berlin!" It was about this time the Princess first met her future husband Prince Charles of Hohenzollern, now King of Roumania. It is said that after her usual fashion she was flying downstairs, when she slipped, and would have fallen, had not Prince Charles stepped forward and caught her in his arms. Her father wrote many loving letters to the Princess while at Berlin.

In one he says: "Since you went away joy has departed from this house! Our gay little bird has flown."

Notwithstanding all the kindness of Queen Augusta and the Royal Family, and all the gay doings and the treasures of art by which she was surrounded in Berlin, the Princess pined for her home, her mother, the invalids, her wide forests and the grandly rolling Rhine. Her poems at this time are full of these home longings; and when she at last reached her home she fell on her mother's bosom with tears of joy.

Soon after the Princess had returned from Berlin, Professor Busch came to Neuwied for a consultation. His opinion made the mother and child's hearts die within them. He told them the Prince of Wied and his brave little Otto were both doomed, it was merely a question of time. Of course they had known Otto's fate before, but they *hoped* about the Prince, and now this plain matter of fact verdict, brought out into the light of day, seemed more than they could bear.

After a time the Princess writes to her brother: "It is not at all easy to keep fresh and bright, and yet it is my duty. It is a duty towards our dear invalids to try and enliven them; it is also my duty towards mamma that everything may not weigh upon her."

On the 17th of October, the Princess Elizabeth wrote to her brother Prince William at Basle, "You should soon write to Otto and send him your photograph if possible. All that you do and say is right in his eyes. You are his ideal. We are for ever talking of you, we can never tire of this subject, for now you are absent, we discover how we love you. Otto's love to us is deeper and stronger than ever, there is a marvellous charm in his large serious eyes, which appears to triumph over the miseries of the body. This is a wonderful experience. All seems so trivial now. All that people say and do seems so small, and of so little importance when God Himself speaks to us.

During this time of trial the Princess wrote a touching little poem called "The Sick Room." Here is one verse—

"Only sorrow thou thinkest we find in the place
Where the sick lie in pain ;
Ah no ! there is often of sorrow no trace,
True peace there doth reign."

She writes on the 14th of December, 1861, "God is now leading me by a way which I had not expected. The whole year has been sad. But this Christmas is to be particularly celebrated as it is the last we shall have together. You cannot think how anxious papa makes us now, he is very weak and coughs almost incessantly. Pastor Harder remarked how good and gentle he was, as if he were for ever taking leave of us. The idea is so dreadful—I long to hold him, in every glance and each embrace, for I love him as never before. My life now belongs entirely to my father. All trivialities disappear before the imposing thought of having to minister to two dying people, with the self-sacrificing power of love. We do not know how early or how late papa and Otto may be taken from us, but we will sustain mamma with the strength of our youth, and thus after her dreadful trials, we may smooth and enlarge the way before her, that she may rest at last."

In January 1862 the Prince of Wied became so increasingly ill that he could not leave his bed. The Princess Elizabeth nursed him devotedly. What a picture the Castle of Monrepos must have presented at this time ! Two sick rooms, two sufferers, both supposed to be dying. The fair young Princess ministering to her father with the most tender love, and not far away the noble mother, watching night and day beside her little Otto, who was dying in frightful

agonies, yet who was strong in faith and made a brave stand to the very last. He passionately longed to see his brother once again, so a telegram was despatched to Basle. How eagerly the watchers waited for the answer. It was something to give even a gleam of joy to their dying boy. Alas! the answer came. The Prince William "was suffering from measles and was not allowed to travel." What a bitter blow this was! Instead of the brave strong brother and son, who would have come into their darkened home like a gleam of sunshine, they now had to take up the added burden of anxiety for him. But, if our hearts are breaking, we must smooth our brows, and still our trembling lips, before our dying friends, so the message was not given to Prince Otto. In the middle of the night, however, he cried out again and again for his brother, and then they reluctantly gave him the sad message.

"Oh! my William," he moaned, "is he to be taken from me?" then he lay quiet, and softly added, "If it is not to be, all is well." Over and over again fell from the white lips of the dying boy, "Give *him* my blessing" the little Prince had often said. "More than we can bear is not sent to us, and when we can bear no longer, the end comes, and we are blessed in Heaven." He could now "bear no longer," so the "end came," and on the 16th of February, 1862, the little martyr soul was released from his agonies, and winged his happy flight to Heaven. His sweet eyes were at last closed in peace, a beautiful smile rested on the pale lips, he had indeed entered into rest.

"Thank God. *God be praised for ever*," solemnly said the agonised mother over her dead child, and so said all who loved him.

The Prince of Wied writes: "According to his wish, Prince Otto was buried on a hill not far from Monrepos, under the shade of lime trees. His holy memory will be glorified in our recollection—an incorruptible legacy, which makes us rich, notwithstanding our endless loss." So deeply and so tenderly was the little Prince Otto beloved, that his loss was ever present with the family.

It was fourteen years after his death that the Princess Elizabeth at last ventured to write a short and touching history of his life for private circulation. But even then the poor bereaved mother could not bring herself to read it.

After Prince Otto's death the Prince of Wied rallied a little, and the family went to Baden for his health. In the summer, however,

they returned to their lovely home at Monrepos on the heights. Some time elapsed before a monument could be placed over their beloved little Otto, but every morning before six o'clock the Princess Elizabeth would mount the hill, and lay some exquisite flowers upon his grave. There she would stay for hours under the spreading limes, thinking of the little brother, who, for more than eleven years, had been the centre of all love and care. He had gone now into holier happier keeping, and they must be content to tread life's darkened pathway, and take up life's duties once again.

The Princess Elizabeth with characteristic energy rushed into every kind of work that lay to hand, and poetry came naturally to her, music also was a passion. She writes to her brother: "Oh that musical fête at Cologne! how Heavenly it was. To hear the ninth symphony of Beethoven with a chorus, words cannot convey it to you. It was divine. When I think of it I seem to be lost in endless space, for melodies and harmonies rush upon me, which can make the most unfeeling tremble, and raise the soul to God!"

On account of the health of the Prince of Wied the winters of 1862 and 1863 were spent at Baden, and here the Princess was a little introduced into society.

The Princess Elizabeth's first ball was at the Court of Carlsruhe, but her beloved friend Marie Von Bibra was on her deathbed, and the Princess could not enjoy gaiety at such a time. Marie died as she had lived, "quietly and gently," and Carmen Sylva wrote a lovely poem "On Sorrow" to commemorate her death. She writes to her brother about this time: "It is certainly a good thing we know the serious side of life. I, for my part, expect much sorrow and many tears. They came to me early, and it probably will continue to be so. One loved one after another is taken away. Each year demands its sacrifice. At how many graves shall I have to stand till I am old? I only wish to fill my little place, to accomplish my humble duties, so that when I die, I may not feel that I have lived in vain."

When the family returned to Monrepos in the spring, the grand Duchess Helène of Russia came on a visit, and that was a time of great enjoyment to the young Princess. The grand Duchess was a near relative of the Princess of Wied, and was much attracted by the lovely young Princess, who on her part was completely fascinated by the Duchess. When the time for parting came the

grand Duchess begged that she might take the charming girl with her on her travels, and to this arrangement the unselfish parents consented. Thus, in congenial society and under the fairest auspices, the Princess Elizabeth set out with the grand Duchess for the Lake of Geneva. They were soon surrounded by a distinguished circle, and the grand excursions into the beautiful country, and over the blue waters of the lake, were a source of deep joy to the young girl, who loved to see nature under all aspects, and drink in the beauty of mountain, lake, and forest. In course of time the young Princess became so dear and so necessary to the grand Duchess, that she wrote imploring the parents to allow the young girl to pass the winter with her at St. Petersburg.

The unselfish answer to this was as follows: "All the sacrifices which it costs her parents to be separated from so beloved a daughter, must disappear before the advantages such a time would offer our child."

The Princess was both pleased and sorry to go. She passionately loved her parents and clung to them like a child. Could she have looked on into the future, the grand Duchess would have gone to St. Petersburg alone. For the Princess saw her father for the last time when she went to Monrepos to say farewell, they never met again.

How sad are these "last times!" There is nothing to warn us that we are looking our last upon a beloved face. We should have been more tender, more loving had we known. Alas! we never do know.

The princess was not greatly taken with St. Petersburg. She writes to her mother: "The similarity and uniformity of the masses of houses destroy the proportions." She was very kindly welcomed by Alexander the Second and the whole of the Imperial family.

Anton Rubenstein undertook her musical education, and this was a great delight. She writes about his playing: "It was as if the piano disappeared under his power. It was the music of the spheres, or a lovely fairy tale. I never heard anything like it. His playing has a magic spell, like the bloom on the grape or the dew on the flowers. They render them twice as beautiful." With all the gaiety at St. Petersburg, its ceaseless dinners, balls and other amusements, her heart turned ever upon her German home. "For you know," she wrote to her mother, "my heart only glows for Germany."

On the 25th of December, 1863, in writing to her parents, the princess says: "It is the blessing of my life that God sends me your love. I can never requite you, but may perhaps impart my feelings to others if God wills!"

Early in January, 1864, for the first time in her life, the Princess Elizabeth became seriously ill of gastric fever. Up to this period she had never even tasted medicine. The lying for weeks in bed, the pain and languor, and above all, being without her mother, were unspeakably trying to the young girl. The Grand Duchess, and the Grand Duchess Catherine surrounded her with motherly tenderness and care, but she pined still for the home faces. As soon as the pain lessened she became absorbed in her father's book, "The Unconscious Life of the Soul," sent to her as a Christmas present. She writes: "I am so glad the book was sent to me just now; as I read I see my father's face before me, and seem to be talking to him."

On the 16th of January, she again writes to her father: "A feeling of pride comes over me, that I have my father's writing in my hands, and a glow of happiness, because every word has come from your inmost heart, for your soul was fully prepared by the wonderful experience of fifty years. I am getting on well now and enjoy these quiet days in which to collect my thoughts. I am glad I am out of the stream of society just now. There will be forty or fifty balls before the Carnival, when they will rush about for a week—the so-called *folles journées*. It is not in my line. I read ninety pages of philosophy yesterday and felt rested."

On the 25th of January, her mother's birthday, she writes: "We are all there, you dear mother, and have our arms tightly round you. Oh, my beloved mother, what strength there is in love! It overcomes time and space. In love lies the idea of eternity, and love alone can understand eternity."

After getting quite strong and comparatively well, the Princess had a serious relapse. This was a bitter time of trial for the Princess of Wied. Her husband was on his death-bed, strength failing day by day, and the bright and beautiful daughter who had always cheered and comforted her, now needed nursing and comfort herself.

The Princess writes: "My child is ill at a great distance from me, and for the first time I am not there to nurse her. I know she is in

God's care and attended by loving and faithful people, but that does not take the load of anxiety off my heart."

On the 1st of March, the Princess Elizabeth was sufficiently recovered to go out into the fresh air, but a few days after she had the news of the death of her beloved father. This was a blow indeed, and although she was outwardly brave and uttered no murmur, her heart was full of anguish, grieving most of all that she had been absent when he died. Her heart was filled now with an intense longing to comfort her mother. She writes to her: "We will fill the desolate rooms with our love, and find our happiness in each other." She also writes concerning her father: "As a tree that has been felled, leaves a light space in the forest, so a light remains after the death of a great man. Carmen Sylva wrote a poem at this time, beginning:

"They have carried him out who was mine,
All so still;
And 'tis wrought—so I dare not repine—
By Thy will."

When the first freshness of grief had a little passed away, the Princess worked at her studies, and as Rubenstein could not continue his lessons, Clara Schumann gave her instruction in music. The Princess writes of her: "I gaze into the beautiful and sad eyes, and think of all this woman has suffered, and of the courage with which she has battled her way through life."

The Grand Duchess went to Moscow at Easter, and her niece was allowed to accompany her. On May the 4th the Princess writes from Moscow: "We are in Moscow, that old town, with its houses of one or two stories, green roofs, and four hundred churches all aglow with the brightest colours. The dimensions of the streets are so enormous that one does not know where the street ends and the open space begins. It is too curious!"

The Princess Elizabeth was charmed with the expedition to Moscow; she was pleased with the palace of the Grand Duchess, everything reminded her of Monrepos. Attended by the ladies-in-waiting, she visited many charitable institutions, and took a lively interest in all—type of the deeper and fuller interest which she took in after years in all good work, when she was Queen of Roumania.

The time for her sojourn at St. Petersburg was now drawing to a close. Later on, when reigning in Roumania, she speaks of this

visit: "I feel every day what a blessing my intercourse with my aunt and her circle of friends at St. Petersburg, was for my whole life."

In June, the Grand Duchess brought her niece back to Germany. What a meeting there was between the mother and child! *Monrepos*, in all its fair summer beauty, looked too sad to be borne. All the lovely scenery, the well-remembered furniture—even the easy chair in which her father had rested, the last books the dear hands had touched, went to the child's heart like a stab. "I cannot live here without him," was her despairing thought.

Thousands have thought and felt like this before her, and thousands will feel so to the end of time; but somehow we stagger on under our heavy load, and in time the way grows brighter and the burden less.

The Princess of Wied, in the midst of all her sorrow, busied herself in attending to the affairs of her son, who had not yet attained his majority and was just setting off on a journey to the East.

In 1866 the Princess Elizabeth went with the Grand Duchess to Ragas, where they saw much of General von Moltke, then at the height of his fame. They often talked of Prince Charles of Hohenzollern, who had been chosen Sovereign Prince of Roumania. Years before Von Moltke had said: "That young Prince of Hohenzollern will make his mark and become talked about." Later on the young Princess went to Naples. She writes to her mother from thence:—"The sirocco has been blowing for some days, and the wild waves of the sea are foaming. The seagulls are skimming between the spray, the clouds are low and cover the peaks of Vesuvius, while wind and rain beat through our window and make weird music. It is just what I like. I should love to go out alone in the storm, to let it rage about me, and sing a wild song to the waves."

In 1867 the Princess writes:—"I was telling *Fräulien von Rahden* last night so much about our lost little Otto when she exclaimed: 'His life must be written, it will be a great blessing for all who read it.' She told me to 'write simply from my heart, and then it would find an echo in other hearts.'"

On the 30th of September the Princess writes:—"I have begun dear Otto's memoirs, and have written to Nana (his English nurse) and begged her to give me details of his earliest childhood."

The winter of 1867 was spent quietly at Monrepos with her beloved mother. "I look back upon this time with particular pleasure," she writes; "I think of the dreamy hours spent in the little room, of the endless conversations on deep subjects, and of the evenings when our spinning wheels hummed and my brother read aloud to us."

In the summer of 1868 the Princess went to Sweden, on a visit to her royal relatives. She delighted in Stockholm, "seated like a Queen on her islands." She writes:—"We made a wonderful expedition to the Malarsee. The Duke of Ostgothland (now King of Sweden) had taken a ship, and we glided on the shining sea, between a hundred emerald isles, to the curious old castle of Grypsholm."

The Princess of Wied spent three months with her daughter in Sweden, and then the latter went to Heidelberg for a short time with the Grand Duchess. Here she spent a few very happy weeks, surrounded by distinguished people and great thinkers. "We had Joachim with his heavenly violin," she writes, "and Frau Joachim with her voice like a mountain torrent. An evening for the Gods!"

On the 2nd of January, 1869, the Princess writes in her journal:—"A song of thanksgiving only for the past warm and happy year. I have no wish for the coming one but that the work of my hands may be blessed. If only Heaven will continue to grant me the power to write poetry, I will guard and keep it as a sacred shrine."

On the 30th of March, 1869, Prince William of Wied came of age, and there were great rejoicings at Neuweid. In the August of the same year he was betrothed to Princess Marie of the Netherlands, but the Princess Elizabeth would entertain no proposals of marriage. However, in the spring of this year, when the Princess of Wied and her daughter were spending a few weeks at Bonn, the Princess of Wied received an invitation from the Prince of Hohenzollern to visit the family at Düsseldorf. The mother guessed the hidden meaning of this, but the young Princess was perfectly unsuspecting, and only looked forward with great pleasure to renewing her acquaintance with the Princess Hohenzollern (mother to Prince Charles) and the gay Princess Marie, his sister.

Prince Charles had been called to the throne by the voice of the nation, and even in a short time much had been done for Roumania. But a Princess was sadly needed, and, in thinking of a wife, Prince

Charles always turned in thought to the Princess Elizabeth, whose acquaintance he had made at Baden. Strange to say when some of the young girl's friends laughingly told her she "ought to be a Queen," she made answer: "The only throne which could attract me is the Roumanian, for there would be much for me to do."

The visit to Düsseldorf proved a great success, and the Princess of Wied was asked to arrange a meeting between the young people. Accordingly the Princess of Wied went to Cologne for a short stay, and one morning, driving to the Botanical Gardens with her suite, the Princess Elizabeth felt herself an object of much attention to a group of gentlemen under the shade of some trees. One presently detached himself from the group and advanced, and to the joy of the Princess it was the Prince of Roumania. She held out both her hands to him and cried: "How glad I am we should thus meet here by chance." After they reached home she said enthusiastically: "What a delightful man the Prince has become!"

Clara Schumann was to give a grand concert in the evening, and while the young Princess was dressing for it, Prince Charles boldly asked her mother for her hand. The moment Elizabeth saw her mother's face after this, she knew something unusual had occurred. The Princess tenderly embraced her and said: "The Prince of Roumania has made you an offer of marriage, my child." The young Princess was deeply astonished, but felt immediately that she could not help loving him; and on the 12th of October she writes in her journal: "I am betrothed, and a blissfully happy bride."

Four days later Prince Charles arrived at Neuwied, accompanied by five Roumanian gentlemen to celebrate his betrothal publicly. This simply consisted of an exchange of rings, but there was a state dinner in the evening. Towards the close of it the Princess of Wied arose, and, struggling for a moment with emotion, said, "Let us drink to the health of the future pair. The betrothal of to-day is more than mere rejoicing. A prince, called to the accomplishment of a high mission, has chosen a bride, who will faithfully take part in the fulfilment of this great duty."

The Prince of Roumania expressed his earnest thanks for their good wishes, and added "This day is the happiest of my life, for I have found a bride who will stand by me in loving devotion." He said afterwards to the Princess "you will have a noble duty in

life. You can comfort when I am too severe, and can gently pray for all."

The Princess of Wied now took the bride to Baden to introduce her to the King and Queen of Prussia (as head of the house of Hohenzollern), and then they went on to the Prince and Princess of Hohenzollern.

Prince Charles gave his bride an album for her poems, and wrote on the first page "Love is returned by love"—millions of hearts will beat for you—and you will not belong to me alone—a whole nation has a right to you—an entire people look up to you with confidence.

Prince Charles, in a few beautiful words, announced his engagement to the Roumanian nation. Much enthusiasm was displayed. Towns were illuminated, and a *Te Deum* held in the cathedrals. On all sides were heard these words: "God save Carol the First, and God save the Princess Elizabeth his bride." A month later the wedding was celebrated with much pomp and splendour. But the people of Neuwied would ever miss the young Princess whom they had fondly named "Our Elizabeth."

* In the Baroness Deichmann's lovely translation from the German, to which I am largely indebted, she mentions, that forty young ladies of Neuwied presented Princess Elizabeth on her marriage with a beautiful carpet which they had worked.

We will leave the Princess here on the threshold of her happy married life, with the sweet words which expressed the true feeling of her heart—"I am wholly thine wherever thy way may lead me."

Nurse Hyde's Experiences.

By J. BARRETT-KNOX.

[CONCLUDED.]

THE last eight months of Nurse Hyde's third year at Zoughton were chiefly devoted to the care of private cases, work which she found far less pleasant than the regular routine of hospital life.

In so many private houses the inmates appeared totally ignorant of even the rudiments of sensible nursing; in others the relations of the patient considered that they knew much more than the nurses, and endeavoured to carry out their own methods and ideas.

In response to a telegram from the owner of a large estate, some two miles from Zoughton—"Send nurse immediately for serious case of rheumatic fever"—Nurse Hyde started at once, and arrived about three o'clock.

Brilliant sunshine was flooding the garden, where gay beds of flowers stretched down to the edge of a picturesque lake, fringed with reeds and rushes. The house of square red brick stood on a level with the water; and the large stone hall felt as cold as any cathedral crypt.

The footman, who opened the door, prepared to take Elizabeth downstairs at once, apparently to the kitchen, but she paused, and in answer to her look of enquiry the man said: "It's the butler who is ill, Miss, and I am just about glad to see you, for I've sat up with him two nights, and there's a dinner party this evening."

"I had better see your mistress first."

The footman smiled grimly. "Mistress is out riding, and master is shooting."

"Then take me to the housekeeper."

"I daren't go near cook while she's busy; wait a minute and I'll fetch Mary."

Nurse Hyde mentally shook her head, and visibly showed her disapproval when she discovered that no room had been prepared for her, and that Mrs. X. had intended her to nurse the butler night and day, and to rest when able upon a sofa in the man's room.

Finding that there really was no vacant spare room in the house,

nurse changed bonnet and cloak for cap and apron in Mary's room, and then descended to the basement, where, in a room partitioned off from the pantry, she found the butler in all the agonies of rheumatic fever in its first stage.

The air felt cold and damp; and as the sun set, a white mist from the pond crept up towards the window.

At eight o'clock the welcome appearance of Dr. Geogehan banished all nurse's fears for the patient; and it was with a sigh of relief the next morning that she saw him safely conveyed by ambulance to Zoughton, where he ultimately recovered.

"If this is a specimen of a private case, with no comfort for the patient nor care for the nurse, commend me to the hardest work in the hospital by preference," thought Nurse Hyde, as she journeyed towards her next patient.

This was a wealthy, but eccentric old lady, who lived in a beautiful house in Worcestershire. She was gradually losing the use of her limbs, but her mind was vigorous, though her naturally parsimonious character had degenerated with age, until unnecessary economics had become a perfect mania.

She denied herself all luxuries, only to be robbed on all sides by her dependents. She was very kind and considerate to Nurse Hyde, and their day's routine was invariably the same. Breakfast, at nine o'clock, of thin dry toast, and a boiled egg with the date legibly written upon it. (Woe betide the housekeeper if that date was less than a week old.) At eleven, the coachman came in for orders, but old Lady Z. seldom went out, and Elizabeth soon discovered that not only were the horses regularly ridden by the coachman, groom and footman, but that the maids and men each possessed bicycles, and went for daily excursions as soon as their mistress had been carried downstairs for the afternoon.

The head gardener used to spend a couple of hours every morning smoking in the greenhouse while he read the papers; and it was only during the occasional visits of Colonel Z. that any discipline was maintained.

"I know my aunt is being fleeced right and left," he explained to Nurse Hyde; "but it makes her quite ill with excitement to suggest that her household is not perfect, and she can well afford to lose the five hundred a year which her servants spend for her."

A sudden failure of the heart ended old Lady Z.'s days, and Elizabeth looked forward with curiosity to her third case.

The house, at any rate, was charmingly old, with an entrance hall of black oak, a door like a church's, and every detail of Elizabethan architecture perfect.

Slipping down the shallow polished stairs came a tall slender girl, in a soft, blue cloth tea-gown; in her hand she carried an old lacquer tray, upon which were a real old Rockingham cup, saucer, plate, and tea set. Placing her precious burden carefully upon an oak chest, she came towards Elizabeth with outstretched hand of welcome.

For a moment nurse forgot her "cap and gown" in the relief of that courteous greeting. She felt as if back again at home, and the old beauties of Hyde Abbey were repeated as she turned into the long western gallery. Only upon Shardillon Hall poverty had set its cruel seal. Everything was old, and, in the eyes of the girl in blue, everything was priceless.

After many weeks Nurse Hyde learnt to walk circumspectly, and to avoid the holes in the carpets; also, she found out which chairs could be handled with safety. In the long saloon "the Queen's chair" only held together from long habit; next to it "the Duke's table" possessed but three sound legs, but Marlborough himself had broken the fourth, and the great "Sarah" had bound it together with a hank of worsted.

"The Abbot's sofa" had come from the celebrated Priory of Black Canons at Southwick, and had been used during the marriage of King Henry the Sixth with Margaret of Anjou.

But the blue lady was shy of talking about her treasures. To her the past was a sacred world, peopled with dead and gone ancestors and their friends, and it seemed sacrilegious to introduce strangers to them.

"What *do* you do here in winter? Are you not buried alive?" enquired a strange girl, who had bicycled over one dull afternoon. "I should just hate the country."

"Where do you live then?" asked the blue lady, politely.

"In Liverpool," replied her visitor, proudly. "*Such* an interesting town—plenty going on. I should hate the country."

"For what I *have* received, I *am* truly thankful," thought the blue lady.

She kept her visitor in the old library, and talked of the latest novel and the newest bicycle tyre, and Miss Liverpool said afterwards that really for a country girl, her hostess was wonderfully well informed, but that she evidently was quite ignorant about the fashions of the day, poor thing, her dress was so peculiar.

Not until many years afterwards did Nurse Hyde discover that the exquisite blue tea gown was one of many, which were made in succession from the old curtains that had lived in an oak press in the attic, and that the Spanish point collars had been given by a prisoner from the Armada to an ancestress of the present wearer.

"My sister likes me to dress in this colour," she once said, and in everything the sister's word was law. Upstairs in the tapestry room Nurse Elizabeth first saw her patient. She looked perfectly well, so brilliant was the soft colouring in her cheeks and so bright and full of life were the dark eyes, but as the days went by and nurse saw and realised the terrible suffering that was so patiently borne, she wondered more and more at the strength of will which carried her little patient triumphantly through every attack.

"I am not going to die until I must," she would say. "I have so much to get through first, and this world is such a beautiful place, I mean to enjoy it to the very last." When too ill to speak or move, she would lie for hours watching the light from the low windows fall across the flowers by her bed, and as soon as she could move, out would come one of the many pencils that were hidden under the pillows, and the little fingers would write down perhaps the merriest chapter in a book that has since charmed thousands of readers on both sides of the Atlantic.

The poor people in the village adored her, and kept her special table bright with flowers. Even the wild birds knew her window, and would watch for the hempseeds which rolled over the sill. A solitary wasp built in the hangings of the old carved bed, and Nurse Hyde thought her patient must have suddenly gone out of her mind, when she found her lying in bed one morning under the shade of a parasol.

The light was not too bright for the merry eyes, "But you see, Nurse, my wasp is bringing in a succession of green caterpillars for her nest, and she drops one every now and then. The first fell into my ink and then one was dropped into my tea, so now we are both contented, and can work in peace."

"Who is the old woman I passed on the stairs just now?" asked Nurse Hyde. "What a pleasant face she has, but such an old-fashioned dress, and the gallery was so dark I only saw her for a moment."

"Do you object to ghosts?" was the blue lady's unexpected answer.

"That was only Harriet; she was my mother's old house-keeper, and she haunts Shardillon; if you notice, we generally have an extra seat for her at prayers, and sometimes for several evenings she appears and sits next to our old butler. The servants have quite grown accustomed to her." So they might have, but Elizabeth never felt quite accustomed to the silent old lady in the net cap, black satin gown and white kerchief, who appeared in the rooms after dusk.

The Shardillons have the gift of double sight, but the subject is never mentioned by them, for so many tragedies have occurred in connection with each successive vision. Lord Shardillon was shot while on active service, and he appeared to his wife and children in the long gallery at the moment of his death. The only son was drowned at sea one Christmas night. The hall was full of guests, and Lady Mary was sleeping in a small room over the hall, when she heard the door open. Slipping on a warm wrap, she came out into the gallery in time to see her brother pass; he stopped by the closed door of their mother's room, turned, and ran down the stairs again, while the whispered word "Good-bye" reached the silent listener in the gallery.

The cry that echoed through the old hall brought Lady Shardillon and all the guests out of their rooms, only to find a little figure, senseless and twisted at the foot of the stairs—of her fall and subsequent illness, and of the passing away of Lady Shardillon, Lady Mary retained no recollection.

Five years had passed since that tragic Christmas night, and now the two sisters, the last of their race, lived in the old home together, making the lives of all around them brighter and happier. Shardillon Hall was a dwelling-place seldom found by the inhabitants of this work-a-day world, much like the "Peace-chamber facing the sun rising" in House Beautiful. It was with reluctance that Nurse Hyde tore herself away, even for one day, but the commands of royalty must be obeyed, and as a member of the "Royal National Pension

Fund," Elizabeth was bidden to attend at Marlborough House on the 26th July, at 2.30 p.m. to receive her certificate from H.R.H. the President. The nurses were all bidden to assemble at Queen's Hall by ten o'clock, and there Elizabeth found herself with some eight hundred others. On entering the hall numbers 1 to 400 turned to the right, and numbers 401 and upwards passed to the left, down the steps. Each nurse went straight into the body of the hall to the table, above which she found a large notice, including her own number. There Elizabeth received her armlet, a band of scarlet and white silk with a shield, upon which was woven a crown and double A. She next tried to find the nurse holding the numbers immediately above and below her own, and after half an hour's search, she discovered them. By eleven o'clock all the members were in position, and a sergeant proceeded to teach them the mysteries of marching past.

The day had commenced with heavy showers, but by midday the sultry heat was overpowering, and many of the nurses who had been on night duty, looked vainly about for chairs upon which to rest, but there were none in the hall, and for two oppressive hours did they stand and rehearse and listen to speeches. What wonder that when one of the gentlemen present suggested that the nurses had better rehearse the "cheer," which would greet Her Royal Highness later on, the sounds that arose were so feeble, the effect terminated in a gale of merriment and laughter.

At 12.30 o'clock a move for luncheon was made. Four hundred nurses marched into the "small hall," three hundred into the "grand circle," and the others went into the "Saloon"—an excellent lunch of sandwiches, etc., was soon disposed of, and half an hour's rest upon the stairs and seats, even more appreciated.

Some thoughtful nurses had brought two aprons, in case of accidents to the one they wore, and these came in most usefully as towels, for though there was a plentiful supply of water and soap, the one small towel provided for the eight hundred nurses was useless before many of them had dried their hands.

All were clean and tidy by 1.30, when in the glaring sun the omnibuses started for Marlborough House.

"I hope there will be some shade under the trees," gasped a little nurse, who had been up all night with a typhoid case, and who had come from Birmingham by an early train.

But, alas! most of the members were marshalled on the open lawn, and the blazing sun beat down upon their heads, which were only protected by thin caps. As the glare from the hundreds of white aprons became more and more painful the ranks broke, and one after another the nurses slipped back to the shady seats under the wall, until at last, in despair, their guardians marched them all off into the open.

Each nurse on entering the grounds took the first turning to the right, and proceeded along the terrace walk to the extreme end of the garden, taking up her position near the large card which included her number. The nurses then ranged themselves in rows of one dozen each, so that a hundred nurses formed a square.

"I *cannot* stand one moment longer," groaned a merry little woman; "or you will have some ambulance practice with my unconscious body, kneel I *must*."

Kneel she and several others did, but the grass was very wet from the early showers, and the victims rose with bright patches of green upon their aprons.

"I am going for my holiday to-morrow," whispered another; "and if I catch cold I can remain in bed and be taken care of, but sit down I *must*!" Turning up her clean frock she subsided into a limp heap under a tree.

The gentleman who was marshalling his hundreds of weary women, looked as if he found it harder work than ten ordinary field days rolled into one.

At last the ceremony began. Each nurse as her name was called out advanced, curtseyed, and received her certificate from the Princess. As soon as three other nurses had done the same, they were supposed to pause, make a simultaneous reverence, and then retire; but, whether from nervousness or ignorance, many of those present failed to get through more than the first curtsey, and as soon as they had received their certificate they bolted up the gravel path, and turning to the left rejoined the group on the grass opposite the Royal table.

When the ceremony was completed, at a given signal, they all advanced towards the table in a semi-circle, when H.R.H. the Prince of Wales addressed them.

The sun beat down with unabated ardour upon the unsheltered heads of the crowd; and presently Nurse Hyde's world began

slowly to revolve, and the Royal group disappeared in a black fog. Hoping that the assembled nurses in front hid her from view, she sank into the only chair at hand and held her head as nearly between her knees as possible. By the time a general move was made to the tea tent the faintness had passed off, and Elizabeth was able to walk steadily and unnoticed.

Amongst some of the nurses a regular stampede for tea took place. Probably they had trains to catch, and would have given that reason as an excuse for their undignified haste.

A shady seat at a little table and most delicious tea soon revived Nurse Hyde, but it was with weary feet that she once more took the train for Shardillon, thankfully rejoicing that a night's rest was before her. She had never felt more tired, except after a long day at Windsor when she was a child.

How well she remembered the little inn where, in an upstairs parlour, she had had tea, and had been so much amused by the two little sheaves of corn upon the mantelpiece. Above them was a label, and upon it, in a clear round hand, was written—"Her Majesty's Royal ears, cut in the Home Park!"

Shardillon was reached at midnight; and there Nurse Hyde is still attending her little patient, and walking with her day by day, a little nearer to the Golden Gates, which always seem ajar to those whose loved ones have already entered in.

The House of the Welf.

By HECTOR H. MUNRO.

THE family of Guelf, which has ruled over Britain upwards of a hundred and eighty years—longer, by the way, than the Stewart Dynasty, beloved of the Legitimist League—and has furnished us with two Sovereigns whose individual reigns have broken all former records, had already, on its succession to the throne of these islands, a "past" of respectable antiquity in the annals of Europe. No

other Royal House can boast such a line of princes, stretching back through the centuries till its origin is lost in the mists which obscure the dawn of mediæval history. When Hapsburgh and Hohenzollern were simple Counts and Burgraves, the Guelfs, or Welfs (as the German form of the name was), were playing important parts in the history of Germany, Italy, and, to a lesser degree, of Denmark. A host of striking and picturesque figures rise from out of the musty records of the old-world Empire:—Henry of the Golden Chariot, Welf I. of Bavaria, Henry the Lion, the Emperor Otho IV., Henry the Marvellous, Magnus Torquatus, and many another princely Welf lead us down, link by link, to the “Wee, wee German lairdie,” of Jacobite song, who augmented the dignity of his Electoral Cap by the lustre of a precarious British Crown.

The origin of the name has been the source of much ingenious speculation, and, of course, not a little fable. According to one story—which was unearthed from the archives of the See of Cologne—a certain lady, wife of a count in Altdorf, gave birth simultaneously to twelve sons. The institution known as the Queen’s Bounty was evidently not in vogue in those days, and the mother, thinking such a wholesale addition to the family neither desirable nor exactly respectable, instructed the nurse to drown them in the river. The latter, who must have been an unusually strong woman, carried the batch of infants concealed in her apron, and being intercepted on her errand by the Bishop of Cologne and asked the nature of her burden, she replied that they were “Whelps.” The deceit was exposed, and the children saved from an untimely end, but the name stuck. A more probable source of the derivation of the name is the *catalus* or wolf, which was the ensign of the family in its early days, and which in the German tongue almost reproduces the word. As late as 1270 Albert I. of Brunswick appears to have borne both a lion and wolf in his arms. Whatever the origin of the name, it served to give a designation to the Papal, or rather the anti-Imperial, party in Italy. During the contests between the Hohenstaufens (then in almost hereditary possession of the Imperial throne) and the Dukes of Bavaria, the rallying-cry of the former was *Hei Waiblingen*! (from one of their Swabian castles so called), and of the latter *Hie Welfe*! (from their family name). These were adopted by the two factions and Latinised

into Ghibelline and Guelph, and the names remained long after the original significance of them had died away.

Tradition, rather than history, has traced the Welfs back to pre-Charlemagnic days, when the family already appears divided into an Italian and German branch, the former of which enjoyed at various times the titles of Counts of Lucca, Dukes of Tuscany, and Marquises of Este. The German branch had their principal seat at Altdorf, which was probably the "cradle" of the whole family, and Welf I., Count of Altdorf, "who served under Charlemagne," is one of the earliest of the series we can historically rely on. Fourth in descent from him was Henry "of the Golden Chariot," of whom the legend runs, that being offered by the Emperor as much land as he could encompass in twenty-four hours with a chariot, he had a small model of one made in gold, which he carried with him on relays of fleet horses; the land thus encircled became the fief of Upper Bavaria, of which he was the first Duke. In the succeeding century the two branches of the family were re-united by the marriage of the heiress Cunigund with Azo, Marquis of Este. From this point the Welfs rapidly become of great importance in the Empire. By a series of politic marriages and fiefs granted "for services rendered," they became possessed of the whole Duchy of Bavaria (which in those days stretched to the borders of Hungary), and the Duchies of Saxony and Brunswick, besides the Dukedom of Tuscany and other territories beyond the Alps.

A certain duke, who was in a position to know, recently made the pessimistic assertion that a landowner's unpopularity might be measured in increasing ratio by the number of acres he possessed. Be that as it may, it is not inconceivable that a subject holding nearly a third of the area of a kingdom might be an object of distrust to his Sovereign, and it is not surprising that when Konrad of Hohenstaufen ascended the Imperial throne, he took steps to deprive Henry the Proud of [some of his territories. The Welf did not submit tamely to this process of spoliation, and when he died (1139), he left his ten-year-old son, Henry, afterwards called "the Lion," in the midst of a lively war against the Emperor. The young Henry proved himself such a formidable antagonist that he received back the greater part of his father's inheritance, though in the end the duchy of Brunswick was the only possession which he transmitted to his descendants. During the struggle he found a friend

and supporter in Henry II. of England, who gave him his daughter Matilda in marriage, and permitted him to charge his shield with the arms of England (then two lions passant-guardant or, on field gules). The lions in the English coat were afterwards increased to three, and subsequently blazoned with the arms of France, Scotland, and Ireland, but the old form was preserved unchanged in the ensigns of Brunswick, till more than five hundred years later, when it was incorporated with the lions of the parent shield in the Royal Standard of George I.

In the person of Otho IV. (son of Henry the Lion), the Welfs attained Imperial rank. The defeat of Bouvines however, drove him from the throne of Germany, which was never again occupied by a member of that family, for although Frederick, son of Magnus Torquatus, was chosen by the Electors in 1400, to displace the dissolute Wenceslas of Luxemburgh, he was killed a few days later, and is never included in the list of Emperors.

Like their fabled ancestress of Altdorf, the Welfs were noted for having large families, and, following the example of the other North German princes, the male members of each family were desirous of all reigning at the same time; hence the multiplication of collateral lines of Wolfenbittel, Lunenburgh, Gottingen, Bevern, Calenberg, Grubenhagen, etc., which are the despair of the chronicler, and which frittered away the strength and importance of Brunswick in endless subdivisions. The House of Lunenburgh was the first to recognise the evils of this policy, and on the death of Duke William in 1592, his seven sons agreed that only one of their number, who was to be chosen by lot, should marry and carry on their branch of the family. In the great hall of their castle gathered the parties to this self-denying ordinance; six balls of silver and one of gold were placed in the helmet of their famous ancestor, the Lion, and the gold ball was drawn by George, the sixth son, afterwards grandfather of our George I.

The Pilgrim's Quest.

A pilgrim worn and weary,
Wan with the heat of the day,
Long'd to lay down his burden,
But rest was still far away,
For there was a gruesome forest
'Twixt him and the Holy Land,
And he prayed for a word to guide him.
A touch from a helping hand.

On, on he pressed thro' the darkness
Where lurked wild beasts of prey,
He groped amid briars and pitfalls,
Through snares that beset his way;
More loud grew the hungry voices,
More heavy his burden pressed,
How, *how* could he reach the city,
The goal of his weary quest?
Fainting, he cried in his anguish,
“Where, *where* is the Land of Rest?”

Then—he heard a voice of music
That bade his fears to cease,
Pure eyes pointed Heav'nward,
Where only are *Rest* and *Peace*.
And then, the pitying angel
Took the pilgrim's hand,
And led him o'er Earth's darkness,
To the light of God's Holy Land.

Damocles, or the Gates of Janus.

By THEODORA CORRIE.

Author of "IN SCORN OF CONSEQUENCE," "PETRONELLA DARCY,"
"ONLY THE AYAH," etc., etc.

CHAPTER VI. (*continued*).

It will be remembered that Catherine Godwin, when she married the Duke of Harebrook, was already a great heiress through her mother. But her fortune remained subject to this one condition:— In default of children it would pass at her death to the oldest male representative of the Godwin family: and at the present moment John Godwin stood next in the succession. Added to this fact, the health of the Duchess was rapidly and visibly failing. Moreover, there being no limit to some people's ambition, Mrs. Godwin had always encouraged the children's friendship with Ted Lisle. She hoped that May, when once grown up, would make an easy conquest of a former playfellow. It was easy to see that Sol would never marry, and that Ted would some day be Duke of Harebrook, and if Catherine Godwin could become a duchess, surely May Godwin could not do better than follow the good example set by her great aunt. It must be taken into consideration that Mrs. Godwin's views about match-making were purely Italian, and harmonized excellently with this scheme for her daughter's future prospects. Since John had been foolish enough to part with the Godwin property, some one, by a judicious use of the fortune now on its way to the family, must recover for him the position that he had lost. So far Mrs. Godwin's plans did not seem to be altogether impracticable. Lady Evelyn represented the only displeasing element of uncertainty in the whole affair. Mrs. Godwin would not confess it, even to herself, but there were times when she fancied that the lady of the Manor secretly laughed at her, and to be pitied or laughed at represents an impossible depth of humiliation to some temperaments. As a girl, once, and only once, Mrs. Godwin had lacked partners at a ball. On her return home, while yet smarting from a sense of disappointment, she had nevertheless torn up her

programme, and had painted her evening as humorously as possible. This one action characterised her whole nature. She deceived even herself, and if anyone failed to appreciate her talents, their defective taste roused her sincerest pity, pity akin to contempt.

Certainly the mistress of Godwin's Rest was a wonderful and a beautiful woman. Many friends came to see the talented fragile widow, who had been through so much trial, who suffered so uncomplainingly, and whose resources were so numerous. Her gowns alone were a study, always made of China crape or of velvet. A scarf of gossamer lace adorned her still beautiful hair. And with her stately carriage, pale face, foreign accent, and pathetic brown eyes, "the home of woe without a tear," most people considered her quite imposing: never reflecting that old Mechlin, Genoa velvet, and an affection for orchids represented tastes little suited to a woman in great measure dependent upon the generosity of a brother-in-law.

If Godwin looked upon his sister-in-law as a white elephant, he never found fault with her if he could help it. In strictly private life Mrs. Godwin had an infinitely aggravating way of putting everyone in the wrong but herself.

At such times, with a voice sounding on like the wind through a keyhole, with slowly dropping tears, she hid her face behind the finest of cambric handkerchiefs till circumstances bent to her wishes. Selfish people generally get their own way in small matters, since they can so easily upset the whole mental atmosphere of a household. If resolutely crossed Mrs. Godwin would disappear into the privacy of her own apartment for a week at a time, admitting no one but Sophie, and solacing her retreat with unlimited books from Rolandi.

Her day lay mapped out much as follows: Chocolate in bed at nine o'clock; after this, composition of poetry or reading of novels till luncheon time. Then after a careful toilette a short promenade in the hot-houses and conservatory, where lived her monkey and three parrots: next, a siesta till four o'clock, when, if the weather proved fine, she went for a drive in a small perfectly appointed brougham. After tea she generally rested till the gong rang, and when dinner was over, lay on the sofa in the drawing-room while Henrietta played the piano, or set the musical box going.

Mrs. Godwin's delicacy furnished a constant topic of conversa-

tion, but she never seemed too suffering to read a novel, and like many other fanciful people, passed her days very comfortably while undergoing an imaginary martyrdom. And upon this mother Henrietta poured out a wealth of affection before which May's careless caresses might have paled into insignificance.

CHAPTER VII.

ON Sunday morning Mrs. Godwin had a headache, bad enough not only to keep her from church, but to necessitate the attendance of her elder daughter. In May's absence Henrietta might act the part of an occasional stop-gap now she was dethroned.

But if Mrs. Godwin's wishes were of an exacting kind, May proved more than a match for them. She had not crimped her hair for the benefit of half-closed eyes, and this morning, after a few minutes' altercation, moved off to put on her walking things, meeting Henrietta in the doorway with: "Mamma wants you to stay with her, Rietta."

"It is your first Sunday, May," Henrietta whispered.

"There will be lots more Sundays," said May tranquilly, "and the fire in the bedroom makes me feel quite faint. You had much better come to church, too; as I told mamma just now, there is nothing like absolute quiet for a neuralgic attack."

But Henrietta shook her head, and went into the bedroom, where she found the invalid lying back languidly, with unbound hair, looking like a figure of Patience on a monument of pillows.

Nevertheless, by the end of the morning, Mrs. Godwin had so far recovered that she announced her intention of joining the family at luncheon. May being the offender could more easily be forgiven than anyone else; indeed, in this instance there seemed to be no opportunity for any word of contrition, or of pardon, for May came in from church with an air void of any consciousness of error.

Kissing her mother lightly on either cheek, and perching herself on the arm of the sofa, she began unbuttoning her gloves, looking as daintily fresh as a white butterfly.

"For a wonder there were a number of people in church from the Grange," she said. "There is something being done to the Harebrook conventicle. They talk of restoring, or improving it, and

putting in some new windows. It is a pity that my cousin Sol can't be classified amongst the repairs too. I do dislike men who seem to find talking too much trouble, and who look at you all the time with their eyes half shut. Aunt Catherine spoke to me coming out. She is not as imposing as she used to be, or else I have grown more courageous; besides, she does look so dreadfully altered, worn to a shadow."

"What did your aunt say to you, May?" Mrs. Godwin asked.

"Oh, she was very gracious, mamma; she even smiled. She looked like an iceberg with the sun upon it, but it never lasts long enough to make a permanent thaw."

"My dear!" said Mrs. Godwin rather shocked.

"Oh, well," said May, "I didn't mean anything. Aunt Catherine was very kind in her own fashion, till I said that I hoped she would soon be stronger, and then she said that her health was not a subject for discussion, and devoted herself to Paul. He seems to get on with her. I had a little talk with Cousin Evelyn too. How absurdly youthful she looks; more like Ted's younger sister than his elder one."

"Ted was in church, then, May?"

"Yes," said May placidly, "Ted was very much in church. I sat just behind him, and he sang away all the time like a tuneful black-bird. He has grown taller, I think, since I went away. He has a very dangerous pair of eyes; but I never imagined he would turn into a dandy. Does he always saunter when he walks?"

"He can walk fast enough when there is any occasion for it," said Henrietta, moved to take up the cudgels for the absent. "Besides, May, dandyism is to some men, what varnish is to a table: a surface bearing no relation to the wood underneath."

"I thought varnish was generally used to conceal inferior material," said May, with more than a suspicion of mischief in her voice. "Some people trade upon their weaknesses. I believe that Ted would never hurry himself, even if he were quite strong."

She spoke with that air of easy assurance which dismisses a subject. Henrietta said nothing more, but her brows knitted. Could it be vanity that had taught Ted to take life easily? Or might not the checking of those swifter movements be attributed in part to the darkling shadow of pain, the unlaid ghost of anxiety too often to be seen in the depths of his sister's hazel eyes? Henrietta's quick

perception guessed an underlying beauty in the bond between these two, beauty that held in it an element of pathos.

There was no denying the fact that Ted's quiet manner misled many people; his manner and his appearance too. That blonde moustache of his had much to answer for. It concealed his mouth, which was a pity, if he had but known it. He had also a trick of crossing one leg over the other, and of studying the space on the ground between his feet, which practice hid a pair of eyes, too often traitors to the quietness of his voice.

At this stage of his existence, May would have written down her former playfellow as a dear good creature, a "combination of contraries," not by any means so orderly as those set forth by the ancient philosopher.

Unconsciously we sometimes take up a mental attitude, for the same reason that we cross our legs: the position saves fatigue. In similar fashion, we often put our friends upon a mental bed of Procrustes, expecting from them not too long a measure, but too short a one. Then some day we are astonished, not to say disgusted, if we find their feet far beyond where we would have supposed them to be.

May had not gone quite so far as the Procrustean measurement, yet she generally regarded the dear good creatures of her personal acquaintance as incomplete and unfinished individuals. The compound propositions of a human being are not easily set down in proper order even when worked by correct rules. The task becomes more difficult still, if we start at the outset, unwittingly making use of the rule of false. An unknown quantity, if we take too little account of it, may prevent our ever finding the key to the required answer.

All this time May's talk rippled on contentedly enough. "Ted has a very good voice, mamma; he told me that they are thinking of getting up some kind of entertainment at the Grange next month. At least Cousin Sol is to be persuaded into giving a village concert for the navvies, to please Cousin Evelyn. She will have the arrangement of the programme; and Ted asked me if I would help. I play more than I sing, you know, but I daresay Ted and I could manage a duet or two together."

Mrs. Godwin smiled. "I daresay you could, dearest."

John Godwin had once said that May never wasted her oppor-

tunities. So far as her power of observation went, it was remarkably keen, and to judge by the satisfied expression of her face at this particular moment, it might easily have been asserted that her morning's conversation after church would not be thrown away.

Neither was her penetration at fault concerning Captain Strafford's probable movements.

Early on the following morning Evelyn and Ted rode over to call, bringing their guest with them. It appeared that Captain Strafford was very fond of sketching, and that he had already heard much of the beauties of Godwin's Rest. It must be confessed that he had the grace to colour on making this assertion; but May's eyes danced with mischief.

Moved by a spirit of judicious, almost unconscious diplomacy—for was he not Irish?—Captain Strafford devoted the first fifteen minutes of his visit exclusively to Mrs. Godwin. He went into unfeigned raptures over the exquisite view, and speedily obtained permission to sketch the house from the front lawn. Evelyn proffering the same request somewhat unexpectedly, and Ted being also present, it seemed the most natural thing in the world that Mrs. Godwin should invite the whole party to spend the afternoon on the following day.

To do Patrick justice, he was no hypocrite, but May being a very variable person, he wished to make a little more certain of her real feelings before committing himself to a possible refusal, though his attentions this afternoon became presently so marked that they would have betrayed him to most people.

Unluckily, Ted unconsciously served as a blind, devoting himself in Henrietta's non-appearance to May, addressing the latter with the pleasant badinage often born of old friendship. If May's airs and graces were a little pronounced, something might be forgiven to such exuberant youth and good spirits. Besides, she was more than usually pretty, too: brilliant Ted called it, and in her perfect self-possession there seemed to be nothing of the school-girl element left.

Before leaving, Evelyn Thorne invited both May and Henrietta to dine and sleep at the Chase on the following Friday.

Now it must be owned that, where her suspicions were not aroused, Mrs. Godwin was often very dense; besides, when a person has had one idea in their minds for some years, it is not easily re-

placed by another. Therefore she accepted the invitation for May, declined it for Henrietta, on the plea of a previous engagement, only mechanically listening when, leading the conversation purposely to her guest, Evelyn mentioned that Captain Strafford would be staying for the present at the Chase. As ill-luck would have it she went on to say that May's presence would evidently give much pleasure to more than one person.

At this moment Mrs. Godwin's near-sighted eyes following a glance that accompanied this speech, mistook Captain Strafford for Ted. Both men were tall and fair, and unfortunately both were standing side by side with their backs to the light.

Mrs. Godwin gave the needed consent with an inward throb of pleasure, and Evelyn Thorne rose to go, having delivered a note of warning which fell on deaf ears.

Essentially truthful herself she referred to her cousin's prolonged stay, as she saw that the intimacy between the two young people seemed already to have over-stepped the limits of ordinary intercourse. The dinner invitation might not have been given so readily had she been aware of May's silence towards Mrs. Godwin. There were wheels within wheels here, of which some of the actors were only partially conscious.

Ted departed in a thoughtful frame of mind. Henrietta had not appeared at all, and it was very disappointing that she should be unable to dine at the Chase. Mrs. Godwin had certainly explained that her youngest daughter generally spent Friday evening with the Miss Swanns. "A little piece of kindness which must not be omitted, even at the cost of a greater pleasure."

Ted felt very grateful to May, who put in some pretty pleading on Henrietta's behalf, that for once the rule might be proved by an exception. Mrs. Godwin only smiled sweetly and shook her head.

On the departure of the visitors, May retired upstairs to decide an all-important question relating to various evening dresses, and being in that pleasantly excited frame of mind which requires a listener, went in search of her sister.

But for once Henrietta seemed in no state to give sympathy. She was lying on her bed, with a face as white as the pillows.

"Why, Rietta, what is the matter?"

"It is nothing; I shall be all right directly," said Henrietta, but she lay very still, and her face remained so colourless that May drew

near, genuinely alarmed. "It is nothing, May," Henrietta repeated, "I am all right, only the gardener's little girl burnt herself so dreadfully just now. She was easier when I left her, for luckily we had some carbolic oil in the house, I fetched it and did her up, but it was dreadful to see the poor little mite."

May shuddered. "I should have fainted away. It was just like you to wait till afterwards."

"I did feel inclined to run a mile in the other direction for the first few minutes," said Henrietta honestly.

"But you didn't; you stayed to tie her up," said May.

"Yes; she is easier now, poor little thing. Her face isn't touched, and they have sent for the doctor. He will do more than anyone else can to make her comfortable for to-night. Some things are hard to understand, May."

"Are they? What do you mean?" said May. Her mind relieved now from all fear for her sister had gone off at a tangent to its former standing point, and was mentally weighing the relative merits of a white silk body against a white satin square one, so that her face looked sufficiently interested to have satisfied most people.

"I mean I never realised before how dreadful pain could be," Henrietta said, sitting up, and putting her feet to the ground.

"Why should you try to realise it?" said May, with a touch of impatience in her voice. "I never think about anything painful if I can help it. Of course I would give money and be charitable, but seeing things gives me the creeps, and thinking of them helps nobody. Come along now, darling; I never can see the good of moralising, and I do need your advice about my clothes. I can't quite make up my mind what to wear on Friday. I have put out my frock for to-night, and I must see yours, too. Sophie is sure to make some mistake if she is not over-looked."

Obediently enough Henrietta followed her sister. There would always be a strong affection between these two, but a mutual understanding, never!

"I wished you could have been in when Cousin Evelyn called," said May, presently, while she busied herself with the consideration of the two rival bodies. "And I wish you were going to dine at the Chase next Friday. Cousin Evelyn was so nice about asking me. Do you always spend Friday evenings at the Miss Swanns, Rietta?"

"Not always, May; I generally do when it is convenient. Some-

times mamma is not able to spare me, but I go to the Nutshell whenever I can. What are you making that face for?"

But May declined to explain.

"Shall you sleep at the Chase?" Henrietta asked next.

"Yes, mamma gave leave at once. She seemed very pleased about it."

Henrietta fidgetted, then said, "Have you told mamma anything yet, May?"

"Told her what?" said May, with the most innocent air in the world.

"What you told me, May: that you care—that, I mean—"

May laughed at her sister's confused questioning.

"I never said that I did care, Rietta—I wanted him to care for me: that was the point from the first. Then one has all the interesting part of it, and none of the bother. I always notice when girls first fall in love that they fret themselves nearly to death, while the man is making up his mind. Never fall in love at all; at any rate not till after you are engaged! That is my idea of happiness."

"But mamma has not the faintest idea of anything, May."

"Sooner or later I will enlighten her, not just at present, I think," said May. "How do you know that he is going to speak? Frau-lein Sandkatze always says that it is vulgar to take things too much for granted: besides, I am not sure that I do altogether care for him. You are not going to break your promise, are you?"

Henrietta could have shaken her sister, but she might just as well have shaken a feather bed.

"I never break my promises," she said, "only I do wish that you would speak to mamma."

"Mamma would give advice," said May, "and my definition of advice is, that it is a good thing which everybody gives in flat contradiction to one's own opinion. As for your calling this matter a secret, it seems to be a pretty open one by this time. I am sure Paul guessed it this afternoon. He pretended to be listening to other people, but I believe he was watching all the time."

If May wished to divert attention from herself, she succeeded. Henrietta's cheek flushed as she said "Paul never listens, May, or pretends."

"Well then he is more long sighted than most people, Hetty;

however, we won't argue about it. I have quite made up my mind to wear my white silk to-night, and now I must have a look at your clothes."

"My dress is put out," said Henrietta. "It is a white silk too. Uncle John insisted upon giving me my first gown himself. He took me to town the week before last on purpose to choose it. We had a nice day altogether. But oh, May! such a comical thing happened while we were in the train. Two of the funniest old ladies got into our carriage at Wimbledon. A third, evidently a sister, saw them off; with a button boy and ill-tempered pug dogs in attendance. The two old ladies who travelled with us were evidently on a shopping expedition too. They each had a couple of hand-bags, and a list of commissions made out on a sheet of cooking paper.

They looked so hard at me, that I am sure they must have been mentally taking the pattern of all my clothes. That wouldn't have mattered, but their staring and fidgeting annoyed Uncle John. Just before we reached Waterloo he bent forward and said to the old lady opposite: "Madam, may I ask if you see anything very peculiar in my niece's face?"

May sat down on the bed and went into a fit of irrepressible girlish laughter: "I wish I had been with you. What did they do?"

"They looked as frightened as if a gun had suddenly exploded. Then they retreated behind their newspapers with their heads very close together, and I heard them muttering something about 'Fiery old Indian officer;' 'allowances,' and 'unforeseen adventure.' I scolded Uncle John directly we were out of the train, but he only laughed. He said that he wouldn't have me stared at by an impertinent old woman."

"Uncle John isn't half as old as he looks, May. Sometimes he seems to get just as much fun out of little things as a schoolboy would. He was so very kind about my dress: and Gladman and Womack have fitted me so beautifully. I should like to have all my clothes made there."

"Yes, it is a pretty frock," said May, critically regarding the snowy folds of the silk dress laid out on a sofa at the foot of the bed. "Very pretty, and what lovely flowers! I suppose you will wear them with it. Where did they come from?"

Henrietta cast a glance in the direction of the dressing-table, where lay a handful of lilies. "I expect Paul gave them to Sophie for me," she said. He knows that I am very fond of lilies of the valley."

May's eyes travelled from the dressing-table to her sister's face. "They will suit you. They look as if they had grown on purpose, but I need something more effective. I mean to wear orchids. There are some nice ones out. I shall tell mamma to cut them for me: then the gardener won't be able to make a fuss. We might as well get them at once for I take a good while to dress."

Though scoffing at the idea of a musical "at home" May was none the less interested as to the effectiveness of her own part of the programme.

Henrietta felt conscious of some excitement, too. Her expectation of pleasure, not being purely personal, could find plenty of room for the interests of other people.

Tea once over, Mrs. Godwin and Sophie were both drawn into the business of May's toilette, either to fetch flowers, to fasten knots of ribbon, or to spread out the contents of a dressing case. Henrietta's own time for dressing was necessarily shortened, yet she was the first to be ready, aided by Sophie, who presently came to her assistance. Leaving May and Mrs. Godwin deep in the discussion of various ornaments, the old bonne laced up her nursing's dress with a care in every passing through of an eyelet hole which told of a good deal of unexpressed tenderness, and of some stronger feeling besides.

But Henrietta never expected much attention from her mother. There was still something of the child in the question that fell presently from her lips: "Shall I do, nurse?"

Sophie's deft fingers fastening a spray of flowers into the girl's hair, paused a moment in their occupation.

"Do?" she said. "Mademoiselle would always do: in brown holland it would be the same." At this outburst Henrietta laughed outright.

Gathering up her fan and gloves she ran lightly downstairs into the hall, where Godwin stood waiting. He first looked at her with a smile, and then followed the smile with a kiss.

"Am I not beautiful to behold?" said she gleefully, spreading out her skirts with both hands, and dropping a miniature curtsy..

"Perfect," he said; "where is May?"

"Oh, she is on her way with mamma. What has become of Paul, Uncle John?"

"I am here," said an unexpected voice, and Paul came out from the hall window, where he had been standing half hidden by a curtain.

"Your flowers are exactly what I wanted," said Henrietta, "they are lovely! Even Bellissima has had a sniff at them; I wish we could take the old dog with us this evening. I am sure he would enjoy himself, only he might bark at the wrong minute. Paul, isn't it delightful to be grown up?"

He looked at her smiling, but his glance, sweet though it was, struck her with a sense of pain.

She drew nearer, laying one hand lightly on his shoulder.

"You have a headache, Paul. I believe you have been writing all day. That will never do. You must try to forget just for this one evening, that there is such a thing as manuscript in the world. See! I have saved one of your own flowers for you, the prettiest."

With a little touch of concern on her face, she stood on tiptoe slipping the lily with its green leaf, into his button hole. He stood silent, while her fingers were busy with his coat. Slim fingers guiltless of all rings, save one; a narrow band of gold, lettered in dark blue enamel, presented to her by Ted years ago, as a birthday gift.

She had hardly arranged the spray to her satisfaction, when Paul took it out again. Bending down he slipped it through the brooch that fastened her bodice.

"Don't think me ungrateful," he said, "but I am afraid that I am not enough of a dandy to wear a buttonhole. Besides, the flowers are not mine, Ted left them for you this afternoon."

He drew a little away from her as he spoke, while May came down the stairs at the moment, and who had overheard his last words, shot a keen glance at him. He was standing as he often did with his head slightly thrown back. His expression was so quiet that she could make nothing of it. Since her return home, she had already tried various little experiments upon Paul; but, so far, his absolute composure had completely baffled her.

The flowers once settled, he turned away to help his aunt, and cousins with their wraps. Mrs. Godwin always needed a great deal

of assistance on these occasions ; smothering herself in half a dozen shawls, not to speak of an elaborate opera cloak.

Even when helped she dealt largely in crumpled rose leaves. This evening the crumple being fairly represented by the shabbiness of the fly ordered for the two gentlemen. Mrs. Godwin could never forgive Providence for having reduced her to one brougham. The silence with which her brother-in-law met her ironical remarks served to-night as an extra aggravation. She drove off at last with both windows of the brougham up, while Bellissima, disconsolate and abandoned, barked wildly upon the doorstep.

(To be continued.)

Broken Toys.

The little wooden dog is broken
And lies on the nursery floor ;
And the little tin soldiers are scattered
Like wrecks on a wintry shore.
And the dollies which once were pretty
Are a sorry sight to-day,
For their dresses are worn and tattered,
And their beauty faded away.

They are all discarded and dreary,
Alone in the silence and gloom,
Left to themselves and the shadows
That sweep through that empty room.
Time was when that silence was broken
By the sound of children at play,
As they played with their soldiers and dollies
In a long forgotten day.

Alas ! what is life and its pleasures
But a passing puppet show,
Where the figures of men and women
Move in ceaseless ebb and flow.
What is life, with its shadows and sorrow,
Its regrets and its hollow joys,
But a vision of scattered pleasures,
Like a box of broken toys.

The City Treasurer's Holiday.

By FREDERICK DUNKLEY.

THE City Council of Balchester, when they met in April last to transact the public business, were greatly perplexed as to how to deal with an application from the city treasurer for leave of absence. Not that it was unusual for the council to give holidays to their staff; indeed all the officials, except the treasurer, had a holiday annually, but this was the first time he had asked for one. The treasurer had been in office twenty years, and to grant him a holiday now would be to create a precedent which would bind the council in the future. The difficulty of determining the question was also accentuated by the fact, that the treasurer had in his hands at the present moment a much heavier balance than usual to the credit of the Corporation. A loan of £2,000 had just been raised and had to be kept in hand to pay the contractors for a job which was in process of being carried out. No one of course for a moment suspected any connection between this fact and the application of the treasurer, still there were the circumstances to face, and the matter was by no means a simple one. If the Council complied with the request—and it would seem unreasonable if they did not—who would be responsible for the £2,000 whilst the treasurer was away, was the thought uppermost in the minds of many.

So the City Councillors consulted together in coteries according to their proclivities, in the Council Chamber just before the meeting, on the question which was agitating them. Councillor Jones, who led one party and who always spoke first and thought afterwards (if the consequences of his speaking turned out to be serious) said at once "Oh, refuse the application," and his set of course echoed "fuse the application."

Councillor Smith, however, who invariably supported all officials through thick and thin, said to his party, "Of course we must grant the treasurer what he asks," to which they agreed without demur, for he was a strong leader. But there was yet a third party, of which Alderman Robinson was spokesman. Now Alderman Robinson had been mayor of Balchester three or four times, and as

part of his mayoral experience, he had learned the expediency of moving warily. So he said to his friends "We must be cautious—certainly it would be discourteous to decline, but I don't see how we can grant the application without taking measures to keep control over the £2,000 during the treasurer's absence, and that is a delicate point." Then he walked across to where the town clerk stood to consult him in the matter, as mayors learn to do when knotty points arise. Now the town clerk was generally very willing to advise, but he was at the same time a discreet man and no doubt foresaw that complications would arise, affecting unpleasantly his relations with his confreres or with the members of the council, if he expressed an opinion either one way or the other, so he politely declined to go into the matter unless he was called upon to do so officially at the meeting. Thus the party—which might be called the Constitutional party—was left without a policy, and had to wait the turn of events when the matter came to be publicly discussed, before they could shape their course.

When the business was called on, Councillor Jones, who had no thinking to do, was first on his feet, and proposed that the application should be rejected. He gave no reasons, but as it was his usual practice not to give any, no one was surprised at that. Councillor Green, however, who seconded, said that it was preposterous that the city treasurer who was highly paid, and had nothing to do but to look after the cash, should want a holiday. "What," continued he, "did he want a holiday for? His was all holidays." Whereat, as having made a point, and asked an impossible question, he looked hard at Councillor Smith for an answer, but Smith presented a stolid indifference. Councillor Green, thereupon changed his tactics, and still keeping his eye on Smith resumed, "I know you will support the application, and why? Ah, why you always support the officials you know best!"

This shaft was more successful, and when Green sat down, up rose Smith. He looked quietly round the room and finally resting his gaze on Green, enquired whether anyone could bring anything to his charge with regard to the officials, and, if not, he would like to know what Councillor Green meant by his innuendo. Green here interjected. "I said you knew best. It is I who want to know."

A good deal of wrangling of this kind took place throughout the discussion, and when the followers of Jones and Smith had ex-

hausted themselves in the struggle, the chairman put the question to the vote, with the result that the numbers were equal. In the meantime Alderman Robinson had been thinking the matter over, and at this juncture he proposed that a committee should be appointed to go into it, and advise the council at their next meeting as to what was best to be done.

All parties agreed to this as a means of putting off the evil day, for they had had enough of the matter for the time.

But the town clerk did not so easily get rid of it. The treasurer, whose office was in telephonic connection with the town clerk's, rang him up after the Council meeting with the usual "are you there?" "Yes," said the office boy—the office boy always answers the telephone in that way—"Well, tell the town clerk the city treasurer wants to speak to him," resumed that official, and added, when the town clerk had made his presence known, "what did the Council do about my application?" "Um, ah, well!"—a pause. "I did not catch what you said," pursued the treasurer. The town clerk, who had by this time recovered his usual tact, replied "Oh, as it was quite a new thing they had to defer it for committee to go into the matter," and then he clapped down the instrument, and left the boy to answer any further enquiry, and an *ex parte* conversation ensued—something like the following: "Yes, he's gone—no—I don't know—I don't know—I don't know—"—then the boy too left the instrument with a beaming expression.

It turned out that (whether by design or inadvertence is not clear) the committee selected to consider the city treasurer's application, had been so constituted as to consist of Jones and Smith, and three followers of each, with only one of the constitutional party, namely, Councillor Morgan, and it also happened that the treasurer was on the point of being married to Councillor Morgan's daughter, in fact he wanted his holiday for the purpose. This conjunction of circumstances affected the matter very unfavourably for the treasurer, as Councillor Morgan, considering himself an interested party, thought it prudent to absent himself when the committee met, with the result that there was a dead lock, the voting for and against the proposal being again equal. The only course now open was for the committee to adjourn, until such time as they could get Councillor Morgan to attend, and this they did.

It is needless to say that Councillor Morgan now became a man

much sought after by both parties. He was literally shadowed by all the members in rotation, and his house seemed in a state of siege. If Jones or one of his followers called in the morning, Smith, or some one on Smith's behalf, was sure to call in the afternoon, and occasionally both parties gave him a call in the evening. Each party tried in turn to steal a march on the other, and poor Morgan was the victim. He might indeed have refused to see all comers, but he was a polite man, and for some reason or other did not tell either party how he was situated, but temporised with both, and as long as it was an open question as to how he would vote, both pertinaciously interviewed him, and endeavoured to persuade, coerce, or cajole him to their side.

In due course the committee again met, and though they waited half an hour for him, Councillor Morgan did not put in an appearance. This was a triumph for Jones' party, as, in default of a majority, nothing could be done, and the treasurer would not get his holiday. Smith too perceived this, and appealed to the officials for advice, but Jones objected. "How can we act?" said he, "without a majority one way or the other." "The majority be hanged" retorted Smith, "are the Council to be hoodwinked because a committee are recalcitrant." Both sides were getting angry, and a storm seemed brewing, but at this juncture the clerk endeavoured to pour oil on the troubled waters, by suggesting that the committee should report that they were unable to agree on a recommendation, and ask to be relieved of the duty imposed upon them. This course, he pointed out, would give the council an opportunity to again consider the question themselves, and to settle the matter one way or the other. After a further display of heat, a majority accepted the suggestion of the town clerk, and the committee reported accordingly.

Whilst matters were thus pending, the members of the Council studiously avoided meeting the treasurer. Many of them were probably afraid of being awkwardly questioned, for while their views were strongly urged where they had the sympathy of numbers, it was another matter to have to support them alone in the face of the individual whose interests they affected, and his friends felt a bit ashamed to own that they could not carry out their favourable intentions. It was certainly inconsistent on the part of the members, who had bethought themselves to be cautious about letting the

treasurer go, that they should now refrain from keeping an eye on him, but all sections alike adopted the same attitude and dodged him as much as they could. Latterly this had been easy, as he had seemed to avoid them, and they felt much relieved at not meeting him.

So things went on passively, except for the action of the two opposing parties who sought, with more or less success, to win, to their way of thinking, the members of the neutral party, and both leaders openly proclaimed that they had a majority, though they knew in their hearts that the issue was very doubtful. But the matter was to be set at rest in a much simpler way, and without the aid of either friend or foe.

On the morning of the day on which the City Council were to meet, and which was just a month after the treasurer had applied for his holiday, the Town Clerk received a letter bearing a foreign postmark. The contents of the letter were as follows:—

April, 189 .

DEAR SIR,—Will you kindly inform the City Council that I have changed my place of residence?

They were so long considering my application for a holiday that I obtained leave from another quarter, where it is not usual to ask for it, and, in the absence of a request, is considered granted. Though this may be considered an Irishism, I allude to what is commonly called "French leave."

The £2,000 which the Council were good enough to place in my hands, I have invested in the purchase of a charming villa in a country where, I am thankful to say, "red tape" does not abound, nor the Queen's process run.

Yours faithfully,

J. MONEYBAGS,

(Late City Treasurer of Balchester.)

TO THE TOWN CLERK, BALCHESTER, ENGLAND.

Councillor Morgan was not present at the Council meeting.

The Last Confession.

Yes! I have sinned. Come close, I'll tell thee all,
Then let my soul pass to unutterable woe.
I killed him, father, killed him, all for love of her.
Great God forgive me, but I loved her so.

Ah! well I mind the day she jilted me
For that other, curse his smiling face.
Hell's torments would be sweet, could I but know
They had him fast within their fierce embrace.

'Twas not her fault; she fell into the snare
Of his soft, lying tongue and damned deceit.
He stole her from me like a craven cur;
Perdition take him for a cowardly cheat.

I see once more the love light on her face,
The sweet enchantment of the sad grey eyes;
I press once more those ripe red lips,
As on my breast her yielding figure lies.

Grant, O Thou Great Avenger of the Right,
Before I pass into the vast Unknown,
That I may see her dear sweet face once more,
Then for my sin I'll willingly atone.

Yes! father, give me time, and I will pray
One last wild prayer for her dear sake,
That He who knows the secret of our hearts,
May for us both some consolation make.

Yes! father, I am sorry. Tell her this.
Would God, I knew that she forgave me all.
With her sweet name upon my dying lips
I'd answer gladly the Great Judge's call.

They tell me, father, somewhere far away.
Beyond this rasping life of sin, there'll be
Another chance for those poor souls who've failed.
Grant this for both of us—poor Nell and me.

If this be so, then I will die in peace.
Your blessing, father—thank you, it is well.
I'm ready now to meet my unknown fate,
So—God forgive me—sweetheart mine—farewell.

A Sketch in Gombre Colors.

By JESSIE E. ENGLISH.

THROUGH the lowered blinds the afternoon sun was stealing into a luxuriously furnished chamber, where every costly appointment was the essence of refinement and the evidence of wealth.

Upon a high white bed, supported by the large lace-trimmed pillows, lay a young girl—dying.

She was so young to die, it seemed a cruel, relentless fate, that she should be called to yield up her life in its very spring-time, and yet, why repine?—she had found it harder still to live. She knew her strength was ebbing fast—fast—that the end was near, and two others who watched beside her knew it also.

A short while ago all the bells had been set ringing with the joyful news that an heir was born to a noble house—but to-day the frail little thing lay in a tiny coffin with sweet flowers scattered over it. The man at the girl's right hand sat with his face turned towards her, a stern, set face it was, whiter even than her own, and upon it the fingers of an over-mastering grief had traced their marks and left deep lines behind.

He was her husband, though one would more readily have believed the child-like looking creature lying there had been his daughter. He was more than five and twenty years her senior, this lord of the manor, and a year ago he had married her, the pride and beauty of the village, and lifted her to the envied position of his wife. She had no love for him—he knew it well, she had even whispered it tremblingly, but he was entranced by her soft girlish beauty, captivated with the natural grace of her shy manners and speech, and overruled every scruple. And she—pitifully weak—was dazzled with the bewildering prospect he held before her, and filled with awe and wonder that such a fortune should befall her. She strangled the cry for love, that was striving for utterance in her heart, and thus the tragedy had begun.

It was nearly played out now, but the last act had culminated in a scene of the strangest sadness. The other watcher in the room, kneeling beside the bed with his boyish frame convulsed with ill-

suppressed sobs, had been her playmate, her friend, her lover, since the days they had woven daisy chains together, with their little dimpled hands, away down in those sweet scented meadows.

He had loved her so well, and when he knew she had cast him aside to take another, the light of his life had suddenly gone out. He cursed his rival in his heart, for his wealth and success, and tore himself out of sight of the woman who had been his ideal of loveliness and truth.

And she had miscalculated her strength, and after a while hungered desperately for a glimpse of his face, the sound of his voice, a touch from his hand, yet she knew the past could never return and the present was what she had made it.

The suffering she had meted out to another was paid back to her in full measure; life lost its savour and grew empty and colourless. She sought after happiness feverishly—greedily—but always it eluded her grasp.

Like some rich luscious fruit swaying upon the bough of a lofty tree, it hung temptingly before her longing eyes, it seemed almost within her reach, but anon the soft wind wafted it high above her head, she could but touch the outside rind, the hidden delicious flavour of the fruit itself was held away from her thirsting lips.

A pitiless retribution was hers in truth. The little life within her own that was to bring her fresh hope and new joys was doomed. The heir to all their broad lands was born to die, after that it seemed easy enough to lose hold of the rest of earthly things. Through the long days and nights of agony and delirium that followed, she called piteously for her love, and babbled hour after hour of "green lanes and may-blossoms," of "the stream where they used to wade," and "the scent of the hay-fields."

When consciousness returned at length, and she knew that she was sinking fast, that no power could avert the end, she had turned to her husband, and besought him, for the sake of love and pity—for Christ's sake—to let her look once again on that face she could only see in her dreams—to speak a word of farewell, so that perchance her tortured spirit might find rest.

So, in answer to a peremptory summons, he had come to that dark, still chamber, and now he held the small, fragile hands in his own, and rained his tears and kisses upon them. And over the girl's face there crept a look of ineffable peace.

"It was such a mistake," she whispered brokenly, "and nothing can put it right now—he has been so good to me, and I tried very hard to love him, but you were always in my heart. You must not be angry," she went on, turning to her husband, "nothing matters now, and it is only I who have been weak and wicked, I wanted so much to be rich and great, I did not know then that love would be stronger than all." Her eyes wandered back to the other face again—"Say good-bye, dear, dear one. I cannot bear to hear your sobs; and kiss me once—just once—because it is for ever."

The boy's wild eyes searched the elder man's strong, immovable face, in an agony of appeal.

"Do as she bids you," he said; and the lad bent over her, and took and laid the last kiss of earth upon her lips.

Then a long, heavy silence prevailed, and they both still watched. Her husband held her little hand in his, and she pressed it tenderly, but the words of gratitude that rose to her lips she could not speak, and perhaps he never guessed what she would fain have told him.

The end came.—"It is all so strange and lonely, and I am frightened of the darkness," she whispered, and the two beside her who knew well her weak, timid nature, would gladly have given their strong lives for hers—but their love availed nothing—she must pass on alone.

Her hand lay still within her husband's, but her eyes fixed themselves ever on the one who knelt beside her, it was he who heard her last fluttering sigh, and caught her last fleeting smile, and in the days to come, before her memory faded into a dim, distant thing, the remembrance of it eased the fierce misery of his young passionate grief.

But around the man who called her wife, gathered a cloud of darkness, denser even than the shadows of the grave—the thread of his life's story was broken at a point where there could be no re-uniting, and a bitterness, more terrible than death itself, gripped his heart in its cruel clutches, as she slipped away from both of them into the Great Unseen.

LONDON SOCIETY.

AUGUST, 1897.

"Forbidden."

By HELEN F. HETHERINGTON,

Part Author of "PAUL NUGENT, MATERIALIST," "NO COMPROMISE,"
"LED ON," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXV.

A DOUBLE VICTORY.

THE dinner party passed off, as a widow once remarked, with a cheerful smirk, of her husband's funeral, "without a hitch." Beatrice put on her wedding finery to please her father, but as it was more than six months since she was married, she toned down its hymeneal appearance by wearing a host of Neapolitan violets. The Bishop's heart swelled with paternal pride as he looked first at her bright, bewitching face, and then at the perfections of her toilet. There was everything to please his fastidious taste, and as he stooped to kiss her, moved by an irresistible impulse, he would have given almost anything to be able to call her still Beatrice Kennard.

Flora Vivian looked charming in the sweetest of pink frocks. She said she would feel "quite out of it," as none of her particular friends were there, but nevertheless contrived to get more than a fair share of enjoyment from the evening.

The county magnates were voted dull; too much occupied with their own importance to care much about the world outside their small circle. Beatrice felt non-plussed by their abnormal heaviness; but finding it impossible to rouse them into ordinary liveliness, devoted herself of malice aforethought to the Archdeacon, because she meant to win him over to her side in defiance of his wife. Mrs. Winthrop came in looking as stiff as if she were encased in steel armour instead of black broché; and she had schooled her husband to put aside for once his usual urbanity. He felt in consequence

thoroughly uncomfortable between conflicting duties, as he took his place at the dinner table beside the too charming Lady Falconer.

Stiffness and dignity melted away when he met the glance of her mischief-loving eyes, but when he found that he was thawing too fast, he made such a sudden attempt at refrigeration, that Beatrice, who saw through him completely, could scarcely keep her countenance. She had the power of interesting herself in the most widely different subjects, which was very useful to her in a mixed party. She talked to a neighbouring squire about the destruction of young partridges by foxes, with just as much apparent sympathy as that with which she discussed the destructive tendencies of the "Parish Councils Bill" with her ecclesiastical neighbour on the other side. It was no effort to her to make herself agreeable to either of them, because they showed an active and honest interest in their own hobbies. If she had discovered that they were only airing them to make conversation for her benefit, she would not have taken the trouble to pursue either topic, but it was a real nuisance for the squire that the precious animal he depended on for one kind of sport should interfere with the birds he required for the other; and there was no mistake about the genuine indignation of the Archdeacon at a measure which he considered, rightly or wrongly, as a blow against the power of the Church. To the Venerable William Winthrop it was a delightful surprise to find that a girl—fascinating and fashionable—could take a deeper interest, and show a wider knowledge of a thorny ecclesiastical subject than the wife of his bosom. He forgot Mrs. Winthrop's urgent injunctions, or rather he put them aside as evidently unreasonable. He regarded Lady Falconer as a most exceptional young woman, and gave himself away (to use a slang expression) like an enthusiastic schoolboy.

Beatrice's eyes were sparkling with triumph when the ladies gathered round the fire in the drawing-room. "I have managed the Archdeacon," she whispered in Flo's ear, as she administered a pinch to her arm, under Mrs. Winthrop's haughty nose.

"He's only a man," contemptuously, "try the wife."

And Beatrice did. She found it up-hill work, for Mrs. Winthrop stood steadily on the defensive, determined not to be seduced from her allegiance to her own prejudices by the wiles of the arch-offender. All her efforts therefore would probably have been in vain but for the chance discovery that the Archdeacon's wife was bitten with the

mania for providing knitted garments for dusky tribes, who would much rather be without them. Here Beatrice saw her opportunity, and pounced upon it. She happened to know a new stitch, which had been taught her by Mrs. Abingdon in return for her promise to hold a stall at the Westminster Sale of Work. The Sale came off on one of the few days that the Falconers happened to spend in London during October, and Beatrice was splendidly successful. Mrs. Abingdon's gratitude was proportionate, and in the overflow of this beautiful sentiment, she offered to teach Lady Falconer a new stitch. This stitch formed the basis for a treaty of peace with Mrs. Winthrop. She was at the end of her ideas as to knitted trifles in the way of jackets, caps, and those odd garments which have the still odder title of "hug-me-tights," so that a decided novelty in the way of a stitch, was a boon that she caught at with both hands. She forgot Lady Malvern's eccentricities, Lady Falconer's culpable laxity concerning them faded from her mind, for she could only remember that the latter was engaged to come to tea the next day, in order to teach her a stitch which would make all the knitting inhabitants of St. Christopher's green with envy.

The two girls laughed over the double victory; but their laughter soon died away as they thought of their approaching separation. Beatrice had enjoyed the peace and happiness of her father's house to the full. And she looked forward to the unrest and possible unhappiness of Clifford House, Curzon Street, with an ominous presentiment. She had tried to forgive and forget, but she could not shut her eyes to the fear that her husband was deteriorating so fast that she would soon be left stranded on a lonely level far above him.

He had slipped away without a good-bye. How would he greet her when they said "How d'ye do?"

Scores of essays and poems have been written on the subject of good-bye, sometimes only an ordinary semi-colon—at others a tragic full stop; but nobody has thought it worth while to discuss "How d'ye do," and yet the whole after-happiness may depend on the first greeting—which may be either a chill, or a stimulus.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ON THE DEFENSIVE.

THERE was no one to welcome Lady Falconer, except the servants, when she arrived in Curzon Street, but she gave a glance of approval at her pretty den, where there was a cheerful fire smiling in her face and the tea waiting on its silver tray.

"His lordship had not come home, but he was expected in the course of the day," she was informed by Simmons, the butler.

Few people knew that she was in town, or probably some visitors would have dropped in, and she sat there slowly drinking her tea in a state of restless expectation and perfect solitude. She felt as if she could settle to nothing till the first meeting with her husband was over. So much depended on the mood in which he happened to be at the moment. If he were remorseful she would meet him half-way. She thought about it till her uncertainty worried her so intensely that she determined to think about it no more. Tired of inaction, she moved about the room, inspecting a palm which began to look unhealthy, re-arranging some of the smaller pieces of furniture and the lace draperies of the mantelshelf, altering the position of a pot of white chrysanthemums, and finally sitting down to the piano and letting her fingers run over the keys. She hated work, so this was no time for taking up her knitting. She was fond of reading, but the cleverest book in the world could be no good to her whilst her mind was engrossed by other things, so that music was her only resource. Into music she could throw all her hopes and fears, her doubts and dreads, and perhaps it would give her back the composure which was slipping from her as the hands of the Dresden china clock went slowly round the dial. She played until her nerves were completely soothed and her heart melted into tenderness. Passionate rebellion softened into gentle resignation, and her thoughts went back to the days when all her hopes and all her aspirations began and ended in Herbert Clifford, Earl of Falconer. The shaded light of many lamps fell softly on the golden draperies, the dainty china, the exquisitely modelled statuettes, graceful palms, and tall chrysanthemums. A bowl of violets scented the room with their refreshing sweetness, whilst the mellow notes of one of Bach's finest symphonies seemed like a message from a better world than

this. Beatrice played on, and her large eyes grew dreamy and tender, whilst the red lips which had closed themselves so resolutely opened into the shadow of a smile. After all there were infinitely pleasant possibilities in life, and the blank canvas of the future need not be daubed with a blacking brush.

The door opened, and Falconer came in with a cigar in his mouth, his tall figure looming large and distinct against the folds of the golden-plush portière. At the first glance Beatrice's heart sank deplorably and all her hopes withered. Ending the symphony abruptly and leaving the piano, she advanced towards the fireplace. He had none of the spick and span look of the man about town. His black hair was so long that it fell over his forehead, and his whole appearance was that of one who has not thought about it. The cigar, which he had now transferred from his lips to his hand, showed a disregard for his wife's prohibition against anything stronger than a cigarette being smoked in her boudoir ; and although they had not seen each other for more than a fortnight, his sombre eyes met hers without any look of loving recognition. The counsels of his choice friends were still ringing in his ears, and as he looked at his wife he remembered that he was not to "knock under to her," but to "put his foot down" from the first and show that he was master in his own house. Therefore, though he was keenly sensible of her power of attraction, as she stood with one arm leaning on the mantel-shelf and her beautiful face turned towards his, his first words were: "I had forgotten that you were coming back to-day, and I've asked some friends to dine with me."

"So have I," she said, quietly, "Sir Digby and Millie Crosby. Who are yours?"

"Oh, a different lot altogether," with an uneasy laugh, as he was influenced against his will by the refinement of his surroundings. It had seemed such an easy thing down at the Grange to invite Harry Lester, Dick Winter, and the Sartorises, and force his wife to meet them, especially when the two former were edging him on to show his independence ; but here—in Mayfair, with Beatrice before him with that atmosphere of grace and refinement about her which was as natural to her as the air she breathed—the audacity of such a proposal became evident to him.

"Who are they?" she asked, gravely. "If they are fit for me to meet I suppose they will do for the Crosbys? Why don't you

sit down? or do you think it too much trouble to waste five minutes on your wife?"

"I'm just off," he said, hurriedly, but at the same moment came forward a few steps and leant over the back of a chair. "It's rather awkward, you know. The flighty Millie, anything suits her, but that husband of hers is a particular sort of fellow."

"Is Sir Digby likely to be more particular than I am?" she asked, with an indignant flash in her eyes, though her voice was quiet as usual.

He did not look in her face, but studied his extinct cigar with interest. "You are my wife, you see," he said, sullenly, "and you have to put up with my friends as I do with yours."

"No, I needn't put up with your friends, you can enjoy them separately," she explained, with celerity. "Who are coming to-night?"

"Nobody to make a fuss about," trying to carry off the situation carelessly. "Lester and his wife—she's a nice little woman, quiet as a mouse—and Dick Winter, and Nina Sartoris, just to console her for not coming to the Grange."

Beatrice took her arm from the mantel-shelf and turned to face him, as she drew a deep breath. "You have asked that woman to my house?" she inquired in a low voice, whilst her delicate nostrils quivered like a thoroughbred's.

"I have asked her to mine," he answered, doggedly; "and she is going to dine here to-night."

"And you expect me to receive her?" she asked, breathlessly.

"As to that you can do as you like," and he shrugged his shoulders in a way that was not habitual to him. "I don't think your presence is necessary to her happiness. In fact you will have a chilling effect on the whole company, if you put on that con-foundedly stand-offish manner of yours," he added, roughly.

She thought of her father with his chivalrous courtesy to all women, if he could hear how this son-in-law of his addressed his wife! She thought of Hugh Pemberton, of Aunt Judy, of all those who loved her, and her heart nearly burst with rage and humiliation. But the horror of that scene at Ethelred Hall came vividly upon her in a wave of remembrance, and she forced herself to control her own temper lest he should lose all constraint over his.

"Don't be afraid, I shall not be there," she said, as coldly as she could.

"Going to sulk up here, with the Crosbys to keep you company?" he asked, with a sneer, relieved to think that she would not be in the dining-room to chill the expected hilarity, but at the same time uncertain as to whether he ought not to insist upon her presence to save his own dignity.

"Wherever I dine, they will dine with me," she answered, with confidence, as a bold plan developed itself in her alert brain.

"Awfully jolly for Crosby, if it weren't for his wife, you can send her down to us if you like," as he sauntered to the door.

"I don't mean to insult my friends as you insult me," she said, proudly. She only waited till the door was shut behind him, and then she hastened to the writing-table and hurriedly dashed off two notes. This done she rang the bell for Simmons, who was always ready to help her in all emergencies. One note was to ask the Crosbys to dine with her at the Savoy, as her husband had unfortunately made another engagement; and the other to Captain Pemberton, to entreat him to meet her at the door of the restaurant precisely at eight o'clock, and also to take a box or four stalls at the Gaiety if he could manage it, and if not, at any other of the theatres that the Crosbys were likely to prefer. Simmons engaged that the notes should be sent off at once, and offered to go himself to the Savoy to secure a table and order a suitable dinner. He understood the situation completely, though not a word was said to enlighten him, and his manner was full of reserved sympathy, which Beatrice appreciated, though she seemed not to notice it.

Resolutions of patient endurance as well as resuscitated tenderness were blown to the four winds. If her husband meant it to be war, there should be no surrender on her side. She would fight him inch by inch, not with the same weapons, thank God, but with the justifiable arms of self-respect and firm determination. She was possessed with a burning indignation which flashed from her eyes and quivered in her clenched hands. Her combative instincts, so long dormant, were brought into full play. She was ready for a struggle, ready to fight for her rights, and in defence of her honour and her home. As she paced up and down the boudoir there was no fear, and no sorrow in her heart. Misery was waiting for her round the corner, but at present rage, and rage alone, blocked the

road. That woman was to come into her house, to sit, most probably, at the head of the table in her own seat, to use the knives, forks and plates with the Clifford crest upon them, to smirk at her husband, whilst her heart swelled with abominable pride to think she had turned the mistress of the house out of her place—either in her home or in her husband's heart. Out of the house she must go before that woman entered it, and she could not come back until she had left it. She ordered the carriage at half-past seven, and went up to dress in very good time.

Warren wondered what had happened, for she could see that her mistress was in a state of wild, but suppressed excitement. Her hands shook so that she let her rings fall as she tried to gather them up; and though she was looking splendidly handsome, and Warren had dressed her hair in a most ravishing style, she seemed to be too absorbed with her thoughts to take any pride or pleasure in her own appearance. She was dressed in black of the daintiest description, with only a few diamonds here and there to lighten it. Her maid, as she threw the white wrap, with its high sable collar, over her shoulders, hoped that "my lady would enjoy herself." Beatrice's lip curled as she heard the wish, and she walked out of the room with the step and the glance of a Judith going forth to avenge her country's wrongs.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A DINNER AT THE SAVOY.

IF only Hugh would be there! That was the one thought that forced itself to the front, as she made the long round which it was necessary to take to fill up the time, on her way to the Savoy. She was perfectly ignorant as to his movements; he might be at Aldershot or at the other end of England, but she was certain of this, that if he were anywhere within call, he would throw up any engagement rather than let her go alone and unattended to a public restaurant. If he were in London, she was sure of him, but if he were with his regiment down at Aldershot—and if the Crosbys failed her as well—what was to become of her? She could not dine alone in that large well-lighted room, to be afraid of every opening of the doors lest it should proclaim the entrance of friend or

acquaintance. And yet it was equally impossible to go home. What was to become of a lonely girl in the very heart of the crowded city? She could not go anywhere without being stared at, and censured. Respectable places—like Museums, she believed to be closed before eight o'clock, and to none of the livelier places could she go without an escort. If she took a drive into the country, it would not be very amusing in the dark, and she would have to come back before the party in Curzon Street had broken up. Worried by doubts and perplexities, she scarcely dared to get out when the carriage pulled up at the Savoy. But there was Hugh Pemberton coming down the steps to meet her, and her heart gave a bound of relief.

He had an overcoat thrown over his evening things, and his hat was drawn over his eyes, but as he raised it, she saw that his face was unusually pale, and had a queer sort of set expression about the mouth and chin. He was acutely conscious that the eyes of the men grouped about the door were upon them, as he held out his hand to assist Beatrice to alight, and she looked straight up into his face with a smile of frankest welcome.

"I was in such a fright lest you should not come," she said with another sigh of relief, as they mounted the steps together.

"You knew I should if your note reached me" gravely.

"Yes, but there was the doubt."

"The Crosbys have not arrived," he said for the benefit of those men at the door.

"Millie is always unpunctual; but perhaps—Ah here they are! Is that funny little man Sir Digby?" with a gleam of amusement in her eyes.

"My husband was engaged, so I thought this would be more lively," Beatrice explained, after the first greetings were over.

"A thousand times nicer," exclaimed Lady Crosby. "I love the Savoy."

As they made their way up the room to the table in the corner, Millie, who seemed to be in the highest spirits, nodded right and left "There is the Austrian—I forget his name—and Geoffrey Talbot, of course. He looked at you, Bee, and you cut him dead. And there's the odious Mrs. Pringle who wanted me to see her, but I wouldn't."

Lady Falconer paid no attention whatever to these remarks. She

signed to Sir Digby to sit at her right hand whilst his wife was opposite to him, in a post of advantage where she could see from one end of the room to the other. Hugh as the old friend, took the place of host, and devoted himself to the fair Millie. That is to say, she had his smiles, his looks, and his words, but his thoughts were given to Beatrice.

Sir Digby was short, with a round sunburnt face, and fair hair so closely cropped that there was scarcely half an inch of it left. He was not in the least good-looking, but he had a plain sensible face, with a remarkably alert pair of eyes. Beatrice liked him, and gave him all the attention she could spare from her absorbing troubles. She made him tell her of his experiences in the States, and having the tact to see that his hostess, in spite of her youth, and evident health and prosperity, was in no mood for laughter, he racked his brain for some of the most interesting episodes of his erratic tour. Hugh as usual watched and wondered, guessing that another crisis had arisen in Curzon Street, and feeling most hopelessly in the dark. He knew by the wild throb of delight that the sight of Beatrice's hand-writing had given him, that it would have been better for himself if he had been out of reach, but it never occurred to him to wish it. It was everything to be able to help her, to save her as he was doing now from an awkward predicament; and so long as he kept himself well in hand there was every probability of this sort of thing going on to the end of the chapter. He must subdue feeling, ignore passion, and develop or rather stiffen into a machine. He was making this programme for his own edification, whilst he appeared to be listening with an amused smile to Lady Crosby's chatter. If only Beatrice could be happy—and quite prosaically jolly as she used to look across a tennis-net, then he thought he could have been content. He thought so, but he was mistaken, for now that his love had lost all the safe fraternal tinge which had lasted so many years, nothing could have contented him short of possession. She was the one woman in the world to him, and that one woman was the wife of Lord Falconer. There was the turnpike-gate before him—not to be opened or jumped, and yet nothing could induce him to go round by another road. In fact to his dazzled eyes there was no other road to be seen.

“Were you able to get places for us anywhere?”

It was the first time she had appealed to him since dinner had

begun, and he answered directly—"Yes—no stalls—but a box came in just as I was there, returned upon their hands, and I pounced at once."

"At the Gaiety? You won't mind being dragged off to a theatre, Sir Digby?"

"Delighted—I've seen nothing, and been nowhere."

"You've seen me," said Millie with a pout, "and that's enough for most men."

"Enough for almost any man" responded Hugh gallantly.

"My wife thinks that matrimony is very nice—taken in fortnights," remarked Millie's husband with a quiet smile. "She says it is time for me to be off again. I'm getting stale."

"No, you are still the freshest thing out, and all your stories are positively new, and not only hashed up remains of last year's mistakes," Millie said encouragingly.

At any other time it would have amused Beatrice immensely to see the sedate little man and his frisky wife together. It was evident that they were really fond of each other, but nevertheless she fancied there was a grain of truth in Sir Digby's remark, for she was sure that Millie would be bored to death with a husband always at her elbow. If Falconer would only be bitten by the mania of travel, she herself might make something fairly pleasant of life after all. Oh, if he only would. She looked up to find that dinner was evidently over, and that Millie was buttoning on her gloves preparatory to an adjournment to the Gaiety, whilst Sir Digby was fumbling in his pocket.

"Captain Pemberton, you will settle for my husband. This is supposed to be his entertainment you know, though he was obliged to be absent," she explained, as she rose from her seat. Instantly Geoffrey Talbot rose from his, as if they were two marionettes pulled by the same string. He caught her up halfway to the door, and was glad to know that envious eyes were fixed upon him as he shook hands with beautiful Lady Falconer.

"Where are you off to?" he asked eagerly. "Anywhere where I can follow?"

"The doors of the Gaiety are open to all."

"Boxes or stalls?" as he walked by her side towards the entrance.

"A box. Ask Captain Pemberton, he knows the details" carelessly.

"Such ages since I've seen you," ardently. "How's the Bishop?" (as if he were his dearest friend). "I wonder if he remembers me."

"He never forgets a face. Has he ever seen yours?" with a sudden mischievous smile.

Geoffrey Talbot was not the only man who invaded No. 15 on the second row. Millie was one of the most popular women in London, and Beatrice perhaps the most admired. There was therefore, a constant succession of migratory men, and Hugh could not find a single moment for private conversation. Lookers on thought they were the most cheerful party in that gay little theatre. A constant interchange of wit and chaff went on between every act, and anyone could vouch for the fact that Beatrice had not lost her tongue. There was an almost defiant brilliancy in her talk, and every now and then she would give vent to an epigram which had a bitterness in it that only Hugh could fathom. Presently, some one asked where Falconer was.

In the silence that followed, Beatrice said quietly as she fanned herself gently "At home, entertaining a menagerie."

"I met a man in the States" Sir Digby put in with a quickness for which Hugh blessed him, "who had a fancy for snakes, and upon my word, when I was dining with him, a nasty slimy brute tried to take the fork out of my hand."

"I should have surrendered everything to him and bolted," Talbot affirmed.

Beatrice smiled, and said slowly, "That is the only thing to be done under some circumstances," and Hugh, guessing at once what was the sort of emergency that had arisen in Curzon Street, felt an insane desire to burn the house down over its master's head.

"I have never enjoyed anything half so much" Millie Crosbie exclaimed as the curtain fell. "I don't feel the least little bit inclined to go home. What can we do?"

"Why not have an oyster supper at Arminel's. Isn't that the place? And Lady Falconer you won't desert us? and all you fellows come too," Sir Digby suggested hospitably.

The suggestion was carried unanimously, only Beatrice felt in duty bound to murmur something about keeping the carriage waiting too long. Still she was determined not to return to Clifford House till the latest moment; so she gave way at once when Sir

Digby said "Send it away and if you will allow me, I will escort you home."

Millie opened her eyes wide as she heard him, and almost fancied that one day the tables would be turned, and she would be jealous of her flighty husband, instead of his being jealous of his flirty wife. The States had certainly rubbed off some of his sedateness, and she only hoped that he would not develope into the thing she liked to flirt with, but had never meant to marry—"a larky man about town!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

COMING HOME TOO SOON.

BEATRICE felt an absolute horror of the house, when she returned to her home soon after midnight. To her hypercritical eyes it seemed to have already lost something of its former air of order and privacy. The curtains that should have been drawn at intervals down the long hall were all pulled back, and she could see as far as the smoking-room, the door of which was ajar. As she stood at the foot of the broad flight of stairs, a burst of laughter from that open door broke the silence, and Sir Digby saw her shiver.

"Nothing more that I can do for you?" he asked, with a kindly look in his grey eyes.

"Thank you ever so much—nothing," with a sweet smile. "Good-night. Tell Millie not to forget to meet me to-morrow at the Old Masters."

Her foot was already on the lowest step of the stairs when she heard a man's heavy tread coming from the end of the hall. Involuntarily she cast a hasty look at the baronet, who had stopped when on the point of departure, and was now waiting on the doormat. Then she drew herself up, set her teeth, and turned her indignant face towards her husband. How dared he come straight to her from that detestable company in the smoking-room? Was he lost to all sense of shame?

"So you've come back," he said slowly, looking at her with fierce anger in his eyes. "Lucky for you——"

"Don't you see Sir Digby Crosby?" she interrupted hastily, having no wish to drag her domestic miseries before the eye of the public.

"Of course I see him," he returned impatiently. "How do, Crosby?" going towards him reluctantly. "So you've turned your back on freedom, and got into fetters again."

"Yes, and I find them rather comfortable," he said composedly, wondering if he were doing any good by staying on, when the other man so evidently wished to get rid of him.

"I don't want to seem inquisitive," said Falconer with a short laugh, "but may I ask if you two have been spending this long evening together?"

"My wife and Lady Falconer are great allies, and we have had a most enjoyable evening together," Sir Digby said, with a glance towards Beatrice, who was still standing at the foot of the stairs, with one hand resting on the delicately carved bannister. Then he made a little movement towards the door, hoping that she would, at the same moment, take the opportunity for escape.

"I've heard that two's company, but three's dull work—awfully dull, I should say."

"We were not three, but four—and sometimes half-a-dozen," Beatrice said coldly. And then she turned to Sir Digby with a sudden softening of her expression. "I am sure you will excuse me—but I am so tired."

As she went slowly up the stairs, her husband's eyes followed her. The small, dark head, how well it looked as it rose above the fur with which her white wrap was bordered. As he watched, she reached the landing, and as she turned to ascend the next flight, the light of the large lamp suspended from the ceiling fell full upon her face, and there was something in it to-night which struck him even more than its beauty, for it was the face of a desperate woman—and this at the age of eighteen! It was his work, and he recognised the hideous fact with an inward shudder. For a whole minute he stood there as if his feet had taken root, whilst Sir Digby was walking homewards at a brisk pace, and Simmons was seeing to the fastenings of the door. If Beatrice had come home, jubilant over a festive evening, and a hot flirtation, he would have hardened, but simply because she had said so little and yet evidently felt so much, a tinge of remorse crept over his disturbed mind.

"This shall never happen again," he resolved, as he went back to the smoking-room. Faugh! The room smelt like a public! And Nina's cheeks were almost as red as her hair. She looked up at

him as he came in, and then hurriedly pushed away her cards, pocketed her winnings, and stood up.

"Closing 'time," muttered Dick Winter, as he gulped down the remains of his brandy and water, and threw the end of his cigar into the grate behind him. His muddy complexion, bloodshot eyes, and sandy whiskers were often seen at race-meetings, but rarely in decent society. The Earl patronised him, because he had found that his tips could sometimes be trusted, and his conversation was on a level with his own tastes.

Captain Lester's name was not to be found in any English Army List, but he was supposed to have seen some sort of service abroad.

He was a short, broad-shouldered man, with a keen, intelligent expression. His legs looked like a jockey's, his general appearance was that of a groom in private clothes, and his talk was horsey. His marriage with the daughter of a book-maker increased his fortune, but as it, at the same time, developed his proclivities for the turf, it was also a means of diminishing it. He was a good-tempered man on the whole, but as his friends expressed it, he could "cut up rusty," on occasion, and he felt anything rather than amiable at the moment when his host came back after his short absence, looking as if his mental barometer had changed from "set fair," to "stormy." He put the change down to his "fine-lady wife," and gave Mrs. Lester—a frail looking girl in blue silk, with the air of a frightened hare—a violent nudge, as he said in an audible aside, "Orders given to clear out. Look sharp."

Falconer frowned, but only said gruffly: "Too late for another deal, I suppose, Mrs. Lester, but at any rate you've lost nothing."

"No indeed, I've been most wonderfully lucky," her eyes brightening as she held her winnings, tied up in her handkerchief, like a school girl after a scramble for sweets. "Good-night, Lord Falconer."

Nina brushed her aside as if she were a fly. "And how am I to get back to St. John's Wood?" looking up into his unresponsive face with eager eyes, which asked in vain for an answering smile.

"In a cab, I suppose. Have a hansom?" and he went to the bell and rang it.

"One for us, too, please," from Captain Lester.

"It's a long, lonely drive," she pouted.

"Pity you did not suggest to Sartoris to come and fetch you," he remarked, sarcastically.

"Pity I bothered myself to come at all," she answered, crossly, though she had enjoyed herself most heartily. It rankled in her mind that Falconer's wife still possessed enough influence over him to make him anxious to get rid of them all, *without* exception.

"Pity you did, if you didn't want to," Falconer agreed, with his usual politeness.

"Now, you two," remonstrated Harry Lester, with good-humoured familiarity, "don't spoil an awfully jolly evening by a split at the last. When a man's lost his money, his temper's sure to follow it, and a wise woman knows when to leave him alone."

If Falconer felt grateful for his friend's interference he carefully concealed the fact, and the hansoms having been announced, bade them all good-night in the room, without troubling himself to go out to the door.

Mrs. Sartoris was not at all inclined to be disposed of so quietly. She understood the position of affairs exactly. She had a certain amount of shrewdness which enabled her to guess that Lady Falconer had left the house because she did not consider her husband's friends fit to be her guests.

Nina owed her no grudge for this, and appreciated the relief afforded by her absence. But that the man who had invited them should suddenly become ashamed of them, because his wife came home five minutes too soon, Nina could neither understand nor forgive. She would have done better, from her own point of view, to keep her anger to herself, and to get out of his sight as quickly as possible. In her green dress, with every chiffon frill dragged and tumbled, with faded flowers hanging limply with broken petals and bruised leaves, her hair tumbled and out of curl, with the ends dropping in utter dishevelment over her eyes, her usually pink and white face overspread by one all-engrossing crimson flush, she did not look a captivating object. Falconer, in his transient fit of disenchantment, mentally contrasted her with Beatrice, as he had just seen her, with her high-bred grace and perfect refinement, and called himself a consummate idiot for ever having looked at this other girl twice.

"I've a great mind to say I will never come here again," she cried, with an angry flash in her light eyes.

"I don't think you will be asked. It has been a mistake from the beginning," he said, as calmly as if he were discussing the weather.

"A mistake, my coming here!" she exclaimed, with a gasp, for her excitement took her breath away. "It was you that asked me, you that begged me to come, you that told me to slip out of the house without letting Jack know, and now you turn on me."

"Don't talk nonsense," he said, impatiently; "I only meant that another time ——"

"There won't be another time," sharply.

"Oh, very well, just as you like; only if there *is* another time, we will dine somewhere else."

"Yes, you daren't ask your friends to your own house," she cried, mockingly, in a high falsetto that exasperated him, especially as she was standing by the open door. "Do you know you came back to us looking like a naughty boy that had just been whipped. I could have laughed in your face."

Falconer made a step forward. "Go home and laugh in Sartoris's face, if you've the pluck to do it."

An instant change came over the excited girl. Her flush faded, her eyes looked frightened. "I daren't go home—it's too late—Jack will kill me! What is to become of me?"

Falconer heard her without one vestige of pity. "You will go to Jermyn Street, to the sick sister you said you were going to nurse," he said, in a hard voice. "She will let you in at any hour, rather than make a scandal in the street and lose her lodgers."

"Mrs. Sartoris, are you never coming?" It was Dick Winter's voice from the hall, and probably both hailed it as a welcome interruption.

Without a word Nina dragged herself limply from the room, and Falconer remained standing where she had left him, with an expression of ineffable disgust upon his countenance.

(To be continued.)

The Evolution of Nihilism.

By A. M. JUDD.

IT would be interesting to trace the factors in the change which has taken place in Russia since the days of Ivan the Terrible, whose persecution of his subjects was taken as the will of God. He was their "Little Father."

When he chose to consign them to prison, torture and death, when he had the Metropolitan of the Russian Church strangled and hundreds of priests flogged to death at Novgorod, when he had thousands of his subjects scourged and tortured to death, not a single hand was raised to hinder or avenge these outrages, though they went on for forty years. The people believed that all who suffered patiently and humbly whatever the Tsar chose to inflict upon them, would be recompensed with eternal bliss.

These ideas were fully shared by Ivan. In a letter of his—still extant—to one of his victims, Prince Kourbski, who chose to flee rather than submit to the will of his sacred majesty, he charges it against him as a sin that he should dare to escape from his clutches. He writes; "If you are a just and God-fearing man, as you say, tell me why you have fled, instead of receiving from my hand the torture and the death which would procure you a place in Heaven?"

It is not recorded what answer, if any, Prince Kourbski returned to this remarkably cool epistle, but it is an undoubted fact that the majority of Ivan's victims accepted the inevitable without a murmur, and went to their fate, however cruel it might be, in the dogged belief that it was Heaven-sent. Abject submission to the Tsar was the sacred ideal, which had been held before them from their earliest youth. When Prince Kepnin, after being impaled, was dying a slow death of most frightful agony, he sang hymns in honour of the Tsar, his master and murderer.

But times change. Peter the Great's subjects were by no means so submissive. His reforms provoked several outbreaks of open rebellion.

One of the most extraordinary of his innovations was that against the beards of his subjects. In 1705, fashion—that most autocratic

of all monarchs—had condemned the beard in every other country in Europe, and had banished it from civilised society. But this only made the Russians cling more tenaciously to their ancient ornament, as a mark to distinguish them from foreigners, whom they hated. Peter, however, resolved that they should be shaven. He did not stop to consider the danger of so despotic an attack upon the time-hallowed customs and prejudices of his countrymen. He shaved off his own beard, made his courtiers do the same, and determined that the rest of his subjects should follow suit without distinction of rank.

His fiat went forth: not only the army, but all ranks of citizens, from the nobles to the serfs, should go beardless; or, if they still insisted upon wearing a beard, should pay dearly for the privilege.

A certain time was given, so that persons might get over their first repugnance to the order; after which every man who chose to retain his beard was to pay a tax of one hundred roubles. The priests and the serfs, however, were put on a lower footing, and were allowed to retain theirs upon payment of a kopeck every time they passed the gate of a city.

Peter's subjects did not submit humbly, as those of Ivan had been wont to do. Great discontent prevailed, and thousands had the will, but lacked the courage, to revolt. The Tsar was not a man to be trifled with, and though the murmurs were both loud and deep the majority thought it wiser to cut off their beards, rather than to run the risk of incensing a ruler who would make no scruple about cutting off their heads.

For many years a considerable revenue was derived from those who still clung to their beloved beards. The collectors of the beard-tax gave in receipt for its payment a small copper coin, struck expressly for the purpose, and called the *borodovátia* or the bearded. On one side it bore the resemblance of a nose, a mouth, and moustaches, with a long bushy beard, surmounted by the words, *Denyee Vyatee* (money received), the whole encircled by a wreath and stamped with the Black Eagle of Russia. On the other side it bore the date of the year. Every man who chose to wear a beard was obliged to produce this receipt on his entry into a town. Those who were refractory and refused to pay the tax were thrown into prison.

Times have changed. It is no longer the Tsar who arbitrarily

interferes with the facial ornamentation of his subjects ; yet, if some of the Russian writers of the present day are to be believed, despotism is as rife as ever in the land. It is the officials now who use the power entrusted to them to despotically and habitually abuse their authority. The Tsar is ignorant of much of the injustice that is enacted in his name.

It is scarcely to be wondered at that Nihilism has been evolved from that injustice, or that to the swarming millions of half-famished peasants, who are being slowly but surely divorced from the soil, revolution seems the only way of redressing their wrongs, the only thing in life worth living for. Justice is not to be expected from the officials of the Russian internal Administration.

When in 1894 the closing of the second Catholic church in Kroze, near the Prussian frontier, caused some rioting among the peasants, a detachment of Cossacks was called in to suppress the disturbance, and in doing so committed atrocities which created much indignation throughout Europe. They not only rode down the peasants, killing eight of them and wounding forty-two, they also outraged fifteen married women and girls. Yet, from the official act of indictment, it appeared that the petitions of the peasants to the Tsar, praying him to leave them their church, were kept back by General Ofzensky, the Governor-General of the Province. He went to the church on the evening of the 10th of October, and when some peasants approached him with images of the Tsar and Tsarina, adorned with flowers, and asked, "What does the Tsar say to our petitions?" he replied: "The Tsar has rejected your request, the church must be closed." It was then the alleged rioting took place.

It need scarcely be said that only the wretched peasants were put on trial, the Cossacks not being indicted for their inhuman conduct.

What the treatment of the peasants by the soldiers was, may be imagined from the deposition of Cavalry Captain Siemionoff. Actuated by a feeling of humanity, which did him credit, he was assisting an old woman, who was prostrate on the ground, to rise, and for this he was actually *knouted* by his own men in the Church of Kroze.

Such a statement appears incredible, yet such was the account given of the trial, in the *Standard*, of October 13th, 1894.

The prisoners filled eight benches, and included, several who

were in an advanced state of consumption, a totally blind old man, and all the women and girls who had been outraged by the brutal Cossacks.

The peasants of both sexes were stripped and then knouted during the progress of the suppression of the riot. This, Governor Klingenberg himself deposed to, and he also admitted that the peasants were not armed, and that they knelt down and kissed his hands and the hem of his garment, praying that the church should not be closed until the Tsar had decided on their petition.

A number of the peasants were sentenced to periods of imprisonment varying from four months to ten years hard labour, the latter being recommended to the mercy of the Tsar. The rest were acquitted.

The *Standard* Correspondent adds that the Vienna and Polish papers, from which he quoted, might be inaccurate; but the fact that the Court of Justice had resolved to petition the Tzar to commute the heavy sentences to one year's simple imprisonment spoke clearly for the innocence of the peasants, who, instead of being rioters, were the victims of the drunken Russian soldiery.

Is it any wonder when such occurrences as this take place, that Nihilism should up-rear its head, and throw its baleful shadow over the land?

However, from whatever cause Nihilism has been evolved, it is certain that it is rife, and what is more it pervades all classes: students in the universities, members of the ministry, orthodox priests, court officials, no less than professors of various sciences, scions of the highest families, fashionable dressmakers and their assistants, peasants, factory hands, and aristocrats have been arrested as members of the widespread organisation, calling itself "The Friends of Political Liberty," but which the police call Nihilists, Anarchists, and Terrorists.

One curious fact is the number of women and girls who have embarked in the "cause," and these have belonged to all ranks, from the dainty aristocrat to the poor factory girl.

The Nihilists are wonderfully fertile in expedients for baffling the police, though their ruses do not always succeed.

A Nihilist girl, one Olga Linbatovna, had been exiled to Siberia, but managed to escape from there. She pretended to drown herself, and left her hat and cloak on the bank of a river, together with a

letter saying that she could no longer bear the life she was leading, so had determined to make away with herself. By this ruse she had the officials dragging the river for her dead body, and so kept them off the track of her living one.

Olga is described as being simple, quiet and modest; looking at her, it was difficult to believe that this unassuming girl was a Nihilist and escaped convict, familiar with condemnations, prisons, trials, escapes and adventures of every kind.

This outward simplicity and candour served her as a shield, and enabled her to escape from perils in which many men would have lost their lives. One anecdote will serve to show how resourceful she was. By some means the police had got wind of her presence, and almost had her in their grasp. A friend, distancing the *gendarmes* by a few moments, had merely time to rush breathless up the stairs, dash into her room, and exclaim, "Save yourself! the police!" when the latter were already surrounding the house. Olga had not even time to put on her bonnet. Just as she was she hurried to the back stairs and descended. Fortunately for her the *gendarmes* had not yet guarded the street door, and she was able to enter a little shop on the ground floor. She had only twenty kopecks in her pocket, but this did not trouble her; for fifteen she bought a cotton handkerchief and fastened it round her head in the fashion adopted by coquettish servant girls. With the five remaining kopecks she bought some nuts, and left the shop eating them in such a quiet, innocent manner, that the detachment of police, which meanwhile had surrounded the house, let her pass without even asking her who she was, although her description was well known.

The police always have strict orders to let no one who may arouse the slightest suspicion leave a house which they have surrounded. Their chagrin may be better imagined than described when they learned how they had let the prize slip through their fingers.

But all Nihilists are not so fortunate as Olga Linbatovna. Frightful indeed is the punishment meted out to those condemned.

Here is an account given by the late "Stepniak" of some prisoners who were to be posted to Siberia after undergoing about a year's detention in the Troubetzkoi Ravelin in the Fortress of Peter and Paul on the banks of the Neva, at St. Petersburg, the principal political prison of the Empire. The sanitary conditions under which the prisoners live are so awful that one year suffices to turn a

young, strong, healthy man into a prematurely aged, decrepit one, that is to say, if he survives. "Stepniak" relates that, "on July 26, 1883, there arrived at Moscow a number of political prisoners of both sexes deported to Siberia, who had been imprisoned in the Fortress of Peter and Paul. The arrival of the St. Petersburg train caused great commotion among the officials and others who were in the station. Most of the prisoners could not alight without help, some even were unable to move. The guard wanted to transfer them straightway to our train, so as to conceal their condition from the public. But this was impossible. Six of the prisoners fainted outright; the others could hardly stand. On this, the chief of the escort ordered litters to be brought, but, as the litters could not be got into the carriages, the unconscious prisoners had to be lifted out like corpses and carried on men's shoulders.

The first was Ignat Volbshenko. It is difficult to describe the horrible appearance of this man. Eaten up with scurvy, he was more like a putrefying corpse than a living being. Every moment he was torn with convulsions and appeared to be dying.

Alexander Pribylev had no scurvy, but he was so reduced that he could not stand and frequently fainted.

The next was Fomin, a military officer. The year before he was a strong man the picture of health; now he looked like a corpse, and for nearly two hours several doctors tried to bring him round, it was not until evening that he was sufficiently restored to resume his journey.

Paul Orlov, twenty-seven years old, and once remarkable for his stature and strength, was now hardly recognizable. He was bent like an old man, and one of his feet was so crippled that he could scarcely walk. He had scurvy in its most terrible shape, blood was continually oozing from his gums and flowing into his mouth."

There were women also among this ghastly party. "Tatiana Lebedeva had been sentenced to death, but it was commuted to penal servitude for life. The speedy death sentence would have been kinder for the wretched creature than what she must have suffered under its commutation. She was in the last stage of consumption and racked with a terrible cough. She was so eaten up with scurvy, that nearly all her teeth were gone and the flesh had fallen away, leaving her jawbones quite bare. Her aspect was that

of a skeleton, partly covered with parchment-like skin; the only sign of life about her being her still bright black eyes.

Strangely enough, another woman, Yakimova, was the only one of the party who did not appear to have suffered very much, either morally or physically for her detention in the Troubetzkoï Ravelin, yet she had been there longer than some of the others, for the eighteen months old babe she bore in her arms was born in that dismal dungeon, and she had had to fight for its life with the rats that swarmed there. Perhaps maternal love had swallowed up everything else, and her care for her child had prevented her dwelling upon her own sufferings, anyway, notwithstanding the penal servitude for life which was before her, she bore herself with composure and firmness. But the poor infant was doomed, no one could look at it unmoved, it seemed as though every gasp would be its last."

There must be something very wrong with a government under which such horrors as these can be perpetrated. Yet all this severity does not deter Nihilists from following in the footsteps of their doomed companions.

The despotism in Russia, even under the present Tsar Nicholas II., enlightened and liberal though he be in his ideas, is almost incredible to those who live in a free country and with a free press. Autocrat of all the Russias though he be, the young Tsar has shown that he has a feeling heart in his bosom, he has interested himself in the affairs of the unhappy Captain Dreyfus, as to whom there is some doubt about his actual guilt, it is safe to infer that many of the acts of cruelty and oppression in his own land are the work of officials who have their own base objects to serve, be it revenge or avarice, and who pursue their course with little regard to truth and justice, and still less to humanity.

It would be hard to point out a remedy for the existing state of things in Russia. Unfortunately there, the Sovereign, let him be ever so willing to do the best he can for the vast millions of subjects over whom he holds absolute sway, is so closely surrounded by persons who have an interest in concealing from him the actual state of things in his dominions, and in the maintenance of corruption and official abuses, that the truth can hardly ever reach his ears. Yet that Nicholas II. is looking personally into matters concerning the criminals in his dominions, appears to be evidenced

by the Ukase that has only lately (April 1897) been published in the *Russki Invalid* concerning the unfortunate wretches condemned to Siberia. By this order the Emperor provides that they shall be conveyed by rail instead of having to walk the whole distance from Tomsk to Irkutsk, which took close upon a hundred days. The prisoners often had to wait years in the central prisons before being able to continue their journey. The sexes were crowded together indiscriminately, and many fell victims to infectious diseases. Happily now the worst horrors of the journey to Siberia will be things of the past, because of the new order.

Father's Paragon.

By MISS CHRISTIANSEN.

"THERE'S an expression about his eyes I don't like, auntie," said Ina Vincent, as she stood near the window one dark winter's afternoon, looking earnestly at a photograph. She was judging it very critically. "The mouth has a determined look. No, I don't care for his looks, though, no doubt, many would call him handsome."

"But remember, dear, that photographs are frequently misleading. Your father says he is most agreeable; you must not be prejudiced; wait till you meet him."

"But I don't want to meet him. A man who is willing to marry a girl he has never even seen, especially when she has money, cannot be either nice or refined."

"He may have seen either you or your photograph somewhere, and *may* have fallen in love with you; such things do happen."

"Perhaps they do, but it can only be from my photograph, for he has been long in India. Besides, you must admit I've altered considerably since I was photographed four years ago. I was then an awkward school-girl, now I'm grown up." As she made the remark she drew herself up, showing off her graceful figure to advantage. Leaving the window she went towards the fireplace, and placed the photo against a vase on the overmantel, opposite to her aunt.

"What do you think of him, auntie? Don't be frightened of hurting my feelings, I have none as far as he is concerned. The Hon. Clive Bruce is nothing to me."

"He is gentlemanly-looking, perhaps a little stern; he has a good, well-knit figure. How did Owen get it?"

"He saw it lying on a table, among a heap of others, at Lord Lester's rooms, so asked if he might have it, knowing how anxious I was to see him. His name being written across it caught Owen's attention."

"Well, my dear, promise me to do nothing rashly. He may be a charming young man, and perhaps as innocent as you are in having anything to do with this marriage."

"But the Wiltons are poor, so do you think he would have thought of me had I been a penniless maiden?"

Ina had inherited her mother's fortune of sixty thousand pounds; and was, therefore, a desirable match for the son of an impoverished earl, rich only in children.

"I can say nothing about it. Your father said he would call some day, Ina."

"When you will entertain him, I shall peep at him from behind the curtains as he goes away. I do wish he would call on Wednesday, when I shall be at Richmond."

"If he does I shall ask him to call again when you are at home; you must at least see him."

Ina was the only surviving child of Colonel Vincent, who was then serving with his regiment in Bengal. Having lost his wife when his little daughter was but five years old, he brought her to England and placed her under the care of his widowed sister, who had but one son, five years older than his cousin. Mrs. Tremaine welcomed the motherless child to her home, where for the last fifteen years she had been treated as a daughter.

Living in close companionship with her cousin, Ina looked upon Owen as an elder brother, and treated him accordingly. As years went on it never seemed to strike her that their affection could alter, that there should be any wish to be otherwise than brother and sister. But lately Owen found, to his cost, that the affection he felt towards his companion was something warmer and deeper than brotherly love; but he likewise saw how hopeless was the expectation of any alteration in her feelings towards him.

Their calm happy life, however, had been unexpectedly disturbed by a letter from Colonel Vincent, announcing his early arrival in England. The object of his visit, he intimated to his sister, was to arrange a marriage between his daughter and the son of his old friend, Lord Wilton.

The information came like a bombshell upon his relations—to Ina especially so. Without a hint on the subject, to hear that a husband was already selected for her was startling; and from the tenour of the letter everything seemed to be arranged, the necessary co-operation of bride and bridegroom being all that was required. Ina was hurt and indignant at being so quickly and cavalierly disposed of; Owen furiously and bitterly disappointed.

By the following mail Ina received a kind, affectionate letter from her father. In it he confided to her his wishes, and hoped she would see her way to gratify them, as she would gain a charming and agreeable man for her husband.

Colonel Vincent, having been for the last five years in India, had forgotten that the shy awkward girl of sixteen had become a young woman, with likings and opinions of her own.

To reply to such a letter Ina found a difficult task. She pleaded hard for a few years of liberty, to act as his companion when he retired from active service, and ended her entreaty by begging that if the wedding ever did take place it might be in the far future.

This answer greatly disappointed the colonel, who, after due consideration, deemed it wiser to let matters drop until he arrived in England, and intimated that Mr. Bruce would defer the pleasure of making her acquaintance till after the writer's arrival.

"What time is your train due at Clapham Junction?" asked Owen at breakfast, on the day that Ina had arranged to go to Richmond.

"Six forty-five. Why do you ask?"

"Because I'll meet you there and drive home with you."

"That is kind. Will that time suit you, for I can alter it?" replied Ina, eagerly.

"It will suit me perfectly. Now listen. I shall wait in the subway at the foot of No. 4 staircase—you know where I mean."

"I do, the numbers are large enough for anyone to see."

"Tell Simons to have the brougham at the London and Brighton side of the station. Till six forty-five adieu." Waving his hands to the ladies he left the room.

Ina very shortly afterwards started for Victoria, her aunt accompanying her for the sake of the drive.

"Take that shawl with you to put round your throat to-night," said Mrs. Tremaine, as Ina stepped out of the brougham; "it will be very cold when you come back."

As she was dressed in a thick cloth dress and sealskin jacket, her appearance hardly suggested the addition of a shawl. However, to please her aunt she took it.

"I wish you could have Mr. Bruce with you to-day," Ina remarked, saucily; "I feel sure he would amuse you." And after shutting the door she turned into the booking office, looking very bright and lively. In spite of her laughing allusion to Mr. Bruce the thought of him always evoked inward rebellion. However, there still remained six weeks before she need meet that gentleman, and a great deal might happen in that time.

During the day she spent with her friends all her worries were forgotten; they talked and laughed very merrily until tea was brought in, when she was reminded of the flight of time. It suggested trains which would not wait; and though very loth to quit her friend's cosy fireside, she felt in duty bound to go, as Owen had promised to meet her.

It was only after getting out of Richmond station that she noticed how foggy it had become. At first she thought it was steam on the windows but found it to be fog, that became denser and darker each minute as she got nearer London. The houses became indistinct, and the people moved like phantoms; the names of the stations she could only hear. At last, after repeated signals and perpetual stoppings, the train eventually reached Clapham Junction, quite half-an-hour late.

After groping her way along the platform and asking various porters, she at last found a flight of steps leading into the subway, which happily for her proved to be No. 4. "I shall be thankful to get company," she thought, as she looked all round and saw no one at all resembling Owen. "I fear I'm very late, but surely he wouldn't leave me alone in this fog?"

The cold air of the draughty passage made her shiver. She drew her aunt's luckily proffered shawl round her, till only her eyes were left visible, and taking her stand at the foot of the steps waited anxiously.

Ten minutes passed, and still no sign of Owen. Every now and again, on the arrival of a City train, a crowd of gentlemen would fill the subway, and her hopes revived, expecting Owen to be among the number, but in vain.

After waiting half-an-hour, during that time being favoured by an impertinent stare from some of the passengers, she became desperate and determined to go and find the carriage. The fog was now so dense, she could hardly see a yard before her. At that moment, with a shout of relief, she rushed forward, and put her arm affectionately through that of a gentleman.

"O! I am so thankful you have come at last. I could scream with delight! Where have you been? I'm terrified to be alone in such a fog; I've waited nearly three-quarters-of-an-hour for you." Clinging as close as possible to him, she added, "I was afraid you had forsaken me, and I should have to drive home alone." By this time they emerged from the tunnel, and found the carriage. "All right, Simons—home," she said, as she stepped into the brougham. "Quick, Owen, jump in," she said sharply. "I'm starved to the bone, it is so raw."

Her companion did as he was told, and the carriage rolled on.

"Have you been waiting long? And are you so very angry, that you won't speak?" she said coaxingly, putting her face very close to his, and looking up to see a fair, good-looking young man smiling back at her.

"I fear we have both made a mistake," he replied, "but it was so dark in the subway, and you had your face so covered up, it was impossible to distinguish anyone."

Ina shrunk back into the corner of the carriage, and turned crimson, though the darkness prevented her companion seeing it.

"I had to meet my cousin here at 6.45, and I thought you were he," she said, almost crying with fright and vexation.

"As you have not met him, will you allow me to see you safely home? You have just told me that you were frightened to drive home alone. I will get outside with the coachman, if you object to my company."

"Oh, please do nothing of the kind. Perhaps I am taking you out of your way? I live in Cadogan Square," said Ina, horrified when she remembered how she had clung to this stranger, and almost dragged him into the carriage.

"And I in Pont Street, so we are near neighbours," he said kindly, trying to put her at her ease. "Do try and think that you are safer here—even with me—than alone in that dark subway."

"But what did you think of me when I seized you so, as I did? You thought it was a pickpocket?"

"No! I saw your mistake. Now I am anxious to see Owen. I shall hope to meet him some day. I had waited some time for a friend, and was so cold, I was willing to be claimed by anybody."

Suddenly the carriage stopped. Ina dropped the window and enquired the cause.

"I don't know where we are, miss. It's pitch dark, and the lights are of little use. I can't see a yard before me."

"Let us find a policeman," said the stranger, jumping out, "he'll help us. Move very gently on till we meet someone."

The gentleman led the horse carefully along by the kerbstone, till a workman showed them the road to Chelsea Bridge, where they obtained a linkman.

After innumerable stoppages and narrow escapes of being run down, they eventually entered Sloane Street, and recognised that they were close at home.

"You will allow me to give you my card," her escort remarked, as he took out his card case. "There are queer people about on a night like this," he added, smiling.

"Yes; people who pick up strangers and drag them into carriages," she answered humbly. "I feel inclined to conceal my identity after such conduct."

"Oho! think how comfortably I have got home; besides, another boon, I've become acquainted with one of my neighbours. But—I should like to know her name."

"It is one you will soon forget—Ina Vincent."

It was too dark for her to see her companion start as he heard the name; nor did she notice how earnestly he looked at her.

"Are you any relation to Colonel Vincent, now stationed at Lahore?"

"He is my father. Why do you ask?"

"Because I know him very well indeed."

"Who may I tell father I have met?"

"Lord Wallis. Is any time fixed for his return?"

"Yes; I expect him very shortly, for six months."

"Then I shall hope to meet him."

The carriage here drew up at Mrs. Tremaine's door, and after mutual pleasure being expressed at their meeting, Ina entered the house, and Lord Wallis went on to Pont Street.

* * *

During the next few weeks, the friendship so unexpectedly formed, progressed very rapidly towards intimacy. Lord Wallis found many excuses to call at Cadogan Square, and Mrs. Tremaine always felt in his debt, for his timely aid in bringing her niece home from Clapham.

One afternoon when, as usual, Lord Wallis was enjoying Ina's society beside a roaring fire, whose bright, ruddy blaze formed a pleasing contrast to the chilly, raw day outside, he happened to stand talking, close to the mantelpiece, and took up, in an absent-minded manner, first one little nick-nack and then another, till he came upon a photograph stuck well in the background.

"The Honourable Clive Bruce. Who is he, may I ask?" at the same time taking it up and examining the photo closely. "A friend of yours?" he enquired. "The face seems familiar to me."

"Oh, that is a friend of my father's," she replied, blushing, and looking very disconcerted.

"He looks nice. Don't you know him also?"

"I don't, and I have no wish to make his acquaintance."

"Why not? Is he a disagreeable personage?"

"He may or may not be, but I have reasons for declining his acquaintance. I am told he is a paragon, and I hate perfect people, they are so uncomfortable."

Lord Wallis seemed highly amused, and kept stroking his moustache vigorously to conceal a smile. "Did Mr. Bruce send you this photograph?"

"Oh dear no; my cousin came across it at a friend's chambers, and knowing I was curious to see it, begged it of his friend. When father comes home, I shall have to know him," she added, with a deep sigh.

"So you are taking stock of him now?"

"Yes! What do you think of him?"

Lord Wallis studied the portrait for a few seconds, then remarked, "He is decidedly handsome; he reminds me of two friends."

"Of two? What a mixture he must be!"

"He is, but still, good looking;" after which the portrait was put back in its place.

"Well, I shall likely see the Adonis someday," she replied, sighing again.

"Why do you sigh?" he asked, sitting down beside her.

"Because I am very miserable. Father wants me to marry this paragon, and I rebel at being disposed of like a bale of goods. Any feeling, let alone love, seems to be forgotten in the arrangement. I am simply told I have to marry him."

"Surely not forced to do so unwillingly?"

"I can't tell you what will happen—perhaps carried off to India if I refuse."

"Miss Vincent, promise me you won't marry Mr. Bruce unless you love him."

"Promise you, Lord Wallis; what can it possibly matter to you?" she rejoined, startled.

"All that matters to me most in the world, for I love you, and I cannot bear to think of your being unhappy. You must have seen my affection for you. I couldn't keep away from you. Can you try and love me a little?" He took hold of one of her hands, and with his face close to hers, added, "Don't send me away."

"I don't wish to," she replied, blushing, her whole face radiant with happiness, "I love you now."

For the next quarter of an hour their conversation took an egotistical turn.

"You will believe me that I am not taking you to escape the paragon?" she asked eagerly.

"I do heartily," he replied as he kissed her tenderly.

They were presently reminded of sublunary matters by the entrance of Mrs. Tremaine.

"I did not know you were here, I was busy writing letters," she remarked by way of apology for her absence.

"Pray don't mention it, don't stand on ceremony with me," said Lord Wallis politely. "Ina has made time pass very quickly."

"What has she been doing?" asked her aunt innocently.

"She has promised to be my wife," he answered triumphantly.

"Your wife!" Mrs. Tremaine exclaimed, "you don't really mean it—and she is as good as engaged to somebody else. Ina! what

will your father say? how I shall be blamed—really young people are not to be trusted,” she said in a tragic tone of despair.

“I can assure you, you may trust Ina implicitly to my tender care,” said his lordship proudly; she shall have my life’s devotion.”

But all argument was lost upon the lady; she blamed her own innocent stupidity for not seeing how matters were going—she had been faithless in her charge, and was wretched in consequence.

Ten days later Colonel Vincent arrived. Owen met his uncle at the station and drove with him to Cadogan Square.

Five years had made a great alteration in Ina’s appearance. From leaving her a lanky girl of sixteen, her father found a tall slender young woman, whose dignity and carriage were those of a young queen. Her handsome features, clear complexion, and beautiful eyes, that smiled so delightfully, made a lovely face that charmed her father.

“My dear,” he exclaimed, astonished and delighted, “how you have altered. I cannot recognise the little girl I left in the charming young woman before me,” he added proudly. He had come back prepared to chaperone a daughter till he could marry her to the son of his friend, but he was unprepared for her beauty.

A bright happy evening passed quickly by, all unpleasant topics were avoided that night, and Mr. Bruce’s photo carefully hidden away.

“Well Ina! come and talk to me,” said her father the following day, “we have some important matters to discuss.” Lighting his cigar he seated himself opposite to her. “It is no use beating about the bush, you know why I have come home; if anything happened to me, you would be very lonely.”

“But, father, can’t I chose for myself?” she said timidly.

“Not so well as I can for you. Tell me why do you object to Mr. Bruce?”

“Because I hate being given to a man like a bale of goods; my money is his attraction.”

“Nothing of the kind, he is a very nice fellow.”

“But suppose Mr. Bruce dislikes me when he sees me, what then?”

“I can’t suppose that for an instant,” said the colonel proudly.

“But father!” she stopped, and her face grew crimson; “I like someone else.”

"You like someone else!" he repeated aghast, "who may that be?"

"Lord Wallis—I have promised to marry him."

"Who is Lord Wallis that he dares to interfere in my plans?" said the colonel sternly, "what was your aunt doing to allow such nonsense?"

"Auntie knew nothing about it—don't blame her. You will like Clive very much, he says he knew you well at Lahore."

"He says I knew him at Lahore! The man's an impostor. I never heard of him."

"Oh no he is not, you can judge for yourself shortly, you won't be hard on him will you?" she asked bewitchingly.

"I'll make no promises. You put me in an awkward position. I must inquire into this," and he took up the papers as a hint he wished to be alone.

"I shall not be in to lunch," he cried, as he went out a little later, "and if Lord Wallis calls say I'll see him later," a message that was delivered after it was politely disguised. Dinner was a very merry meal that night. The strangeness of meeting after years of separation had worn off, and the colonel was in the highest spirits.

"By the bye, I forgot to say I met Mr. Bruce at the club to-day, and I invited him to dinner to-morrow," remarked the colonel, as they separated for the night. "Will Lord Wallis be here Ina?"

"Not as Mr. Bruce is coming—he would prefer to come alone," she replied quietly. She felt disappointed at Mr. Bruce coming before Lord Wallis, still as matters now stood, it would prove it was from no personal feeling she had not taken him.

"Owen, you are late," said Ina, as she was coming down, and met her cousin bounding up the stairs to dress for dinner on the following night. "Do be quick, father is not yet in, and I shall have that man to entertain alone if he is any way punctual."

"All right, I'll hurry up, but you do look superb to-night, Ina. Clive should be here to see you."

"Do go, dear boy, and don't be long in beautifying," she whispered, and passed on.

Presently she heard a carriage drive up. "Here he comes," she said trembling. But he was not alone, she could hear her father's voice. When she remembered her father would take ten minutes to dress, and her aunt never appeared till the bell rang, she shivered at the prospect. Flight was still possible, but "he who hesitates is

lost," says the proverb, and it proved true, for the door opened and her father's remark of "go in there" settled the matter. With beating heart she turned proudly to greet their guest, when to her surprise Lord Wallis stepped forward.

"Clive," she gasped in a relieved tone, "I am glad to see you. So you know my father now?"

"Yes, he brought me upstairs."

"You remember who we are expecting to-night?"

"I do, the man you hate the sight of—Clive Bruce, now Clive Wallis."

Before she could recover from her astonishment, his arms were round her. "Forgive me for deceiving you, but it was my only chance."

"You Mr. Bruce? Oh, Clive how could you? But I don't believe you, for you are not a bit like your photo."

Lord Wallis laughed heartily. "No, I don't think I am. That photo is a composite one of six young men done by me after some theatricals. To distinguish which charade it represented, my name was written on it. That was why I said it reminded me of friends. To tell you I was Mr. Bruce meant banishment."

"How long have you changed your name?" she asked, still incredulous.

"About a month before you claimed me at Clapham? I got the title from an uncle."

"Well, you made me promise never to marry Mr. Bruce. So I'm free," she remarked, triumphantly.

"Certainly. I wished, and you promised, to marry Lord Wallis, so there's no escape for you."

"Hallo, Bruce, so you've captured the citadel after all," cried the colonel.

"Let me introduce the 'Impostor' to you, father," cried Ina, laughing.

Before Colonel Vincent returned to India, Ina had become Lady Wallis.

Crossing the Rubicon.

By H. B. NEDHAM.

"OH, damnable atheist!" was one of Coke's abusive exclamations to Raleigh, whilst the latter was being tried for high treason in the year 1603. At this juncture Robert Cecil (Earl of Salisbury), one of the Commissioners, ventured to remark: "Be not so impatient, good Mr. Attorney." Whereupon, as the chronicler of the State trials hath it, Coke sat down "in a chafe," but began again after much ado in the court. "You are the absolutest traitor that ever was," and "Thou viper, for I *thou* thee, thou traitor," are some choice specimens of Coke's language, wherein he was unwittingly a bit of a reformer, for such disgraceful treatment of a great and gallant man in peril of his life attracted universal attention, and began that agitation in favour of fair play in judicial cases which was in time to become the rule after such ruffians of the law as Scroggs and Jeffreys had had their fling.

Just contrast this procedure with that in the case of the trial of Dr. Jameson and his fellow raiders of the Rand, and imagine how the latter would have fared under a legal gentleman of Coke's character, holding a brief from the Crown and endeavouring to lull by a pretty liberal use of Billingsgate the suspicions of his crooked-minded master. Such a comparison is interesting, as bearing in mind the differences of legal methods between now and then, and considering 1603 as but an anticipation of 1618, when the career of Raleigh ended, there are many circumstances offering a distinct parallel.

"Thou hast a Spanish heart, and thyself art a spider of Hell," continued Coke to the man who had fought the Dons wherever and whenever he could find them, and who was yet to try conclusions with them and to die at the bidding of the Spanish ambassador. At last the vile language of "good Mr. Attorney" made Sir Walter remonstrate, but the other quickly rejoined: "Thou art the most vile and execrable traitor that ever lived. I want words sufficient to express thy viperous treasons." To this Raleigh calmly answered: "I think you want words indeed, for you have spoken one thing

half-a-dozen times." And so the unequal contest went on. A hostile commission and a brow-beating attorney on one hand, backed by a monarch who never forgot and never forgave except as the coward forgives. On the other a fearless and brilliant gentleman, who had stamped his name indelibly in the annals of one glorious reign, and who, even behind prison bars, was yet to produce work which made the world marvel.

Sentenced to a traitor's death, he was relegated to the Tower, and there the Elizabethan sea rover, courtier, and statesman, became a scientist and historian. The king's own son stood his friend, and said that "nobody, except his father, would dream of keeping such a bird in a cage." Prince Henry even begged the Sherbourne estates, which had been lost through the attainder and given to the minion Somerset. James complied with the request and recompensed his favourite with £20,000, but the Prince died before he could restore the lands to the Raleighs as he had intended to do. It is said that the suspicion of his having been poisoned has been set at rest for ever by medical evidence; but bearing in mind all the details of the Sherbourne business, there seems ample motive for a crime of which Overbury's poisoner was certainly capable, the more so because in 1617 Raleigh, having tempted James to give him his liberty with the prospect of finding an El Dorado in Guiana, was able to say: "The whole history of the world had not the like precedent—of a king's prisoner to purchase his freedom and his bosom favourite to have the halter," words which were not forgotten, we may be sure, by that king and which, perhaps, saved Somerset's life.

Raleigh was expressly told that by fighting the Spaniards he would incur the death penalty on his return. Bacon warned him that any disobedience, such as an attempt to seize the Mexican plate fleet, would be piracy. But Raleigh answered: "Did you ever hear of men being pirates for millions?" So he sailed, it is pretty clear, with the idea that gold mine or no gold mine, treasure of some sort he must have or forfeit his life. If the Dons had to be fought in getting it so much the better, for then there would be a chance of wiping off old scores and avenging the tortures which so many Englishmen—and many a Devon man—had suffered at the hands of the Spaniards and their sanguinary Inquisition.

Raleigh, with his son Walter, his nephew George, and his trusty

lieutenant, Kemyss, had some fourteen ships under his command when he sailed from Plymouth. Things looked bad from the outset. The leader was handicapped in a way that the most ingenious devilry could hardly suggest, for the youngest cabin boy of that fleet, even if he regarded his admiral as a hero, knew him to be, "in the eye of the law," a convicted and unpardoned traitor. The old sentence hung like a pall over the enterprise. Besides experiencing difficulties in watering at the Canaries, they had forty days in the Doldrums. At last Guiana was reached, and it was found impossible to get at the mine without a brush with the Spaniards of San Thomás. Kemyss had charge of this particular service, and when he returned it was with the news of defeat and of young Walter's death in the fighting. The bitter invectives of Raleigh drove Kemyss to suicide. The crews grew mutinous and the vessels separated—Raleigh returning to meet his fate by way of St. Kitts and Newfoundland. Gondomar demanded his surrender, and James himself actually suggested that Raleigh and a dozen of his followers should be conveyed to Madrid and publicly hanged. Who had now "a Spanish heart?" It is on undisputed record that James, when he first came to England, came determined to ruin Raleigh; and it must be confessed that he showed a grim perseverance and a tenacity of purpose which only looked like relaxing when he momentarily loosed his captive, as a cat looses a mouse. Raleigh showed himself in the end as dignified as at his trial fifteen years before, and his last words, when asked to lay his head on the block in an eastward position, were: "What matter how the head lie so long as the heart be right?" Had a richly-laden galleon or two been brought home James and his new pet, Buckingham, would have gone shares, and Gondomar have clamoured in vain. But, as it was, dismal failure and royal hatred sealed Raleigh's fate. Spain must be gratified at all costs, or there would be no Spanish marriage for Prince Charles. A sentence fifteen years old was good enough, and it was acted on. As for the existence of the gold mine recent discoveries would seem to verify the mineral wealth of the Guiana.

Whether Dr. Jameson in raiding the Transvaal acted on his own responsibility or not is perhaps a point for discussion—in connection with matters still *sub judice*—but in any case, as has been already said, there are striking features of resemblance between Raleigh's

adventure and his. In the one drama we see the spirit of daring impelling a man to seek treasure at the expense of those who delighted to send his countrymen to the stake or—as in the case of the discoverer, Bass, even less than a century ago—to a living death in the mines. In the other we see the like bold facing of peril all the more courted, because Englishmen were being treated as beings of an inferior race by ignorant and backward Boers; English women and children were believed to be in danger, and the mineral wealth offered inviting possibilities in the future. But with Jameson, as with Raleigh, everything hinged on success. Both crossed the Rubicon and both failed. If we substitute a Philip for Kruger, Gondomar for Leyds, and King James for Queen Victoria, we may be pretty sure that a short shrift for the gallant Doctor would have been the necessary completion of such a change of *dramatis personæ*.

History has, in truth, been, to a great extent, carved out by men who have disobeyed orders, and who, if called to account after the event, have been able to claim that "nothing succeeds like success." That unlucky leader who not only fails, but while missing his venture, forgets into the bargain Sidney Smith's addition to the Decalogue, "Thou shall not get found out," has to pay the penalty, be it by a state trial or a court-martial. Empires, in short, have not by any means, been built up by wearers of kid gloves. Quite enough is known of the lives of great men of action to prove the truth of this up to the hilt. How much more is unknown? Had a Boswell been ever present by the side of Cromwell, in the saddle or council-chamber, what a different figure His Highness the Protector would have cut! Men of his stamp—the born leaders of the world—have probably been, one and all, guilty of riding rough shod over orders, or treating this or that article of a higher code with scant ceremony. When Pompey was at Capua, and Cæsar was at the other end of Italy, with Rome in a ferment between the two, the mastery of the world was the prize at stake. The conqueror of Gaul crossed the Rubicon, and triumphed. Strongbow, who began the English conquest of Ireland, was courting great risks, for Henry of Anjou was no monarch to be trifled with, and only the personal submission of the buccaneer baron, and the prompt giving up to the Crown of the Irish maritime cities, made the king forgive his subject's independent course of action. Cromwell, by turning rebel and

drawing his sword at forty, upset an ancient monarchy and erected a Commonwealth.

Priests and scientists, too, have made history by breaking through the accepted canons of their day. Luther verily did so when he committed matrimony and embarked on the stormy path of the Reformation. Galileo was tortured as a heretic because of his astronomical discoveries, whereby we may imagine how fanatic theologians (of whom there has never yet, in the history of the world, been a lack) would have dealt by Columbus, had he failed in his quest after a new world, for the daring Genoese navigator acted on geographical theories, utterly at variance with the properly regulated minds of his orthodox contemporaries.

With the great captains and pro-consuls of old, the absence of telegraphs must indeed have been a blessing; and it may be safely doubted whether much of India or America would be ours at the present moment, had the creators of the Empire been fettered by such wires from head-quarters, as was, for instance, one British general when ready for the re-conquest of the Transvaal. Again, it is interesting to surmise as to what would have happened, instead of the capture of Jamaica, had a Transatlantic cable been at the service of Cromwell, who rewarded his victorious admirals with lodgings in the Tower. A sudden emergency might entail with it great responsibility, and court flagrant disobedience to original instructions; but on the other hand, it might also mean that chance which, it is said, comes to every man once in his life. This recalls another interesting contrast, for to two famous men such golden opportunities came at least twice.

In 1796, General Hoche was sent by the French Directory to aid the Irish in their intended revolt. On December 21, there were thirty-five French sail off Cape Clear, with wind and weather fair, but Hoche and his vessel nowhere in sight. As one great historian remarks, had the army been landed, "nothing short of a miracle could save the English power in Ireland." At any time during that day or the next, had Grouchy, the second in command, ventured to act on his own responsibility, Cork must have fallen with its stores of two years' provision for our navy, valued at two millions. But Grouchy continued to cruise about according to orders, until the wind veered right round to the east. Then sixteen of his best ships beat up to Bere Island, but six days were fooled away, and although

the wind brought no English fleet, and the English flag was never seen, Grouchy preferring the risks of a furious gale at sea to a glorious chance amidst an eagerly friendly people on land, sailed away, and by and by the armament arrived almost intact at Brest, and Dublin Castle breathed again.

Many years later, Grouchy again had his chance when sent in pursuit of Blucher who had been badly beaten at Ligny. The French marshal was ordered by Napoleon to march on Namur and Liege. Blucher, however, retired on Wavre. When the distant thunder of the guns at Waterloo was heard, Gerard, Exelmans and Vandamme besought Grouchy to bear to the left and succour the Emperor. But he refused their requests, showing them, says Louvet, the fresh orders he had received. This was on the morning of the 18th, but still he waited and waited, just as he had done when he dawdled away a precious week in Bantry Bay. At last, between four and five p.m., another letter came recalling him to the right of Napoleon's position, but it was then too late, for the Prussian cannon balls were already doing their deadly work, and the Emperor's army had to show two fronts. Well might Napoleon bitterly exclaim, "À Waterloo, Grouchy s'est perdu."

Far otherwise did Nelson act on two memorable occasions, and the first of these was in a maritime conflict, the vital importance of which has never been rightly appreciated, except by some historians or experts in naval matters. Just consider for a moment the position of England in 1797. "France was without an enemy on the Continent, and England without an ally." The war was pressing heavily upon us. The fleet was mutinous, and both at the Nore and Spithead the crews hoisted the black flag, and left the coasts open to French attack. The blundering neglect of the government and permanent officials had nearly lost Ireland, and now with the loyalty of her seamen momentarily gone, the fate of England seemed indeed trembling in the balance. Never, indeed, had the outlook been so desperate since those ignominious times, when London heard the Dutch guns in the Thames. Happily the sailors returned to their sense of duty, and were soon ready to go anywhere or dare anything. And they had able leaders who struck hard whilst the politicians were scheming and clamouring. It was time, indeed, for at this crisis the enemy had to be watched at Cadiz, Brest, Toulon and Antwerp. If the Dutch, French and Spanish fleets

could once unite, their superiority would be overwhelming, and our command of the sea gone. That was the pressing danger, as our admirals rightly understood it; and right well did they confront it. Duncan beat Winter off Camperdown, and Jervis smote the Dons off Cape St. Vincent, and the proposed combination went to the four winds, or the bottom of the ocean. It was at St. Vincent that Nelson—then only thirty-eight, although he had seen six-score actions—so distinguished himself by his glorious disobedience. Jervis had an inferior force, but decided at all costs to stop the Spaniards from Cadiz joining the French at Brest. He succeeded in driving the foe helter skelter back to port, and to this grand *strategic* result, Nelson's celebrated disregard of his chief's orders mainly contributed, a matter of far greater influence for the preservation of our sea power than the hero's capture of the San Joseph, with which, in the popular mind, he is so much identified. Indeed, a well-known French writer thus sums up the victory. "The moral effect was immense. Europe struck with astonishment understood that numbers were of no avail against the maritime skill and courage of the English."

Nelson's flat disobedience to Lord Keith in 1799 we may pass over as more an incident of his connection with Lady Hamilton than an occurrence of war, but it may be mentioned that his amorous dalliance about between Sicily and Naples, when he should have been protecting Minorca, according to orders, was not altogether passed over by government, and Suvarof, the great Russian general, wrote to him very frankly about it from Prague. It was at Copenhagen in 1801, that Nelson's most historic act of disobedience occurred, although it is pretty certain that he had at the time private instructions to act on his own responsibility if he thought fit. He had tried to induce Parker to leave the Danes and Swedes in his rear and destroy the Russian fleet, then ice-bound at Revel; but Parker did not dare attempt such strategy. So in the last days of March, Nelson examined the approaches to Copenhagen, and surveyed its defences. On April 1st, he attacked the Danes at ten a.m., the fire of the enemy from ships, forts, and floating batteries being tremendous. At one p.m., Parker, distant some miles away with the main body of the armament, hoisted the signal to discontinue fighting. Nelson at once ordered his division into closer action, and grappling with the gallant Danes muzzle to muzzle and yard-arm to

yard-arm, won the bloodiest conflict of his glorious career. The extent of the awful havoc may be imagined, when it is stated that the Danish flagship had nearly every man on board killed or wounded. She drifted away, and like the Orient of the Nile, blew up. Despite the story about Parker having privately allowed Nelson a free hand, it is beyond doubt that they were very much at cross purposes, and perhaps as a consequence, Parker was recalled and Nelson appointed in his place. On the other hand, *the latter never received any official recognition for the victory.*

It was by such exploits as these that Nelson attained to that pinnacle of fame which, as the writer of a recent review in Macmillan remarks, he alone occupies among the crowd of heroes of ocean warfare. The statement however that Nelson is the only admiral we can class with great generals like Belisarius, Gonsalvo de Cordova, Turenne, Marlborough and Wellington, invites an unfair contrast, for one is apt to forget that the science of war on land had made great strides ages before the invention of the mariner's compass, and such naval combinations as were planned in the Napoleonic period, were impossible before navigation had outgrown its infancy. In a word the progress of maritime discovery and the development of naval construction are essentially features of modern history entirely undreamed of in those long vanished centuries which witnessed the wonderful strategy of Alexander, Hannibal, or Cæsar. The combination of movements by powerful fleets to command the ocean was necessarily an unknown factor in war so long as the ocean itself was unknown.

It is also strangely rash to say "sea warfare is to war on land what draughts is to chess." Considering that the world has not yet beheld a struggle for maritime supremacy under strictly modern conditions, the critic is hardly able to guess even faintly the possibilities of such a complicated game as naval war of the future. He goes on to speak of Nelson's contemporary, Howe, as "ruining the hide bound traditions of the line of battle when he broke through the enemy." Rodney had done this long before at St. Lucia, but it is perhaps more to our point to leave the reviewer alone, and to note with satisfaction that all three alike, Rodney, Howe, and Nelson were rewarded for their disobedience to old-fashioned precepts by glorious triumphs.

A remarkable instance of unhesitating acceptance of risky re-

sponsibility, in spite of all the drags which boards of directors or their political agents could employ, was shown when General Charles James Napier conquered and annexed Scinde in 1843. The dawdlers and the advocates of a policy of letting events shape themselves could only expect this energy from a man with such a record as Napier's, but the controversy it aroused, although almost forgotten except by old Anglo-Indians, was a furious one in its day. When a lad of sixteen Napier had helped his father to hold their Irish home against the rebels of '98. At Corunna he received five wounds and again at Busaco he got a bullet through the jaw. After being invalided for five months he rode ninety miles at one stretch, and on one horse in order to take his place again in the front. And yet after all this experience of sheer hard campaigning he went as a student to the military college at Farnham and probably regarded as a practical holiday, a short break in his book-work during which he managed to take a share in the Hundred Days and figure at the storming of Cambrai. In '42 he found himself in command on the Scinde frontier. Outram reported from Haiderabad that all looked peaceful at the very moment when Napier knew the Ameers meant war. They had been excited by our disasters in Afghanistan, and the Scinde troubles were, to use Napier's expression, "the tail of the Afghan war." He knew the enemy numbered at least 50,000 against his couple of thousand, and it behoved him to set his camp in the best order. This he swiftly set about, and his proclamation anent some young officers who rode recklessly about the bazaars is characteristic. "Gentlemen as well as beggars may ride to the devil when they get on horseback, but neither gentlemen nor beggars have the right to send other people to the devil." He continued to hearken to his political adviser, Outram, so long as it seemed safe, and then with lightning-like rapidity he acted for himself. With 700 men on camels (two on each), a couple of cannon, and two hundred cavalry, he plunged into the Scinde Desert, and in a week arrived at Imamghar the famous stronghold of the Ameers. The fortress was blown up, and then followed the splendid victories of Haiderabad and Dubba. Next came the memorable annexation. But if in all this Napier acted in opposition to his political adviser he well knew like Nelson how to fill his own followers with a spirit of unflinching obedience. At the battle of Haiderabad he

noticed a gap in a long wall facing his right front. He sent Captain Tew with one gun and a company to the opening and told him to die there. Tew seized and blocked the gap, paralysed the Baluchis, and died like a hero. Napier had crossed his Rubicon and been triumphant, but his laconic message "*Peccavi* (I have sinned, *i.e.* Scinde) was not forgotten by the directors, and when they went, on receipt of the news of the terrible battle of Chillian-wallah, cap in hand to the old Duke of Wellington, and asked him to name a commander, only took his advice and appointed Napier of Scinde with the greatest reluctance.

Such men as Napier were never shirkers when a momentous decision had to be taken and acted on, nor is the type, thank heaven, by any means extinct. Many can still remember when there were thousands of highly respectable sickly sentimentalists who would gladly have gone to see Governor Eyre end his career like Governor Wall outside Newgate, because in saving Jamaica he had hanged a black preacher. The late Major "Roddy" Owen too went literally counter to government injunctions when he made his bold dash to Wadelai, and running the gauntlet of Arab musketry for mile after mile, secured the valley of the Upper Nile for England. He saw his chance, and was struck with the same patriotic decision and energy which had in a previous case prompted another gallant officer to swiftly annex the Isle of Perim just in the very nick of time. Finally one cannot help recalling the memory of Gordon of Khartoum, of whom Mr. Boulger says in his recently published biography, "He would do things in his own way in defiance of diplomatic timidity or official rigidity." It is said with justice that the history of our nation is taught in a wretched manner in our schools as a mere chronology of "battle, murder, and sudden death," but what would our boys think of it if we glossed over the lives of the Raleighs, and Nelsons, and Napiers, and offered them in exchange the stirring details of the personalities of so many little Englanders?

A Daughter of Babylon.

IN TWO PARTS.

By C. HORNBY.

PART TWO.

CHAPTER III.

IN THE TOILS.

KATHERINE FARNHAM sat alone on the grassy plot, near the ruins of the old fort, beside her lay her paint box and on her knees she held a small sketching block, over which she was bending, intent upon her work ; in one hand she held a large red sunshade, which had to be put down every time her brush wanted fresh colour. Miss Farnham looked up with a smile as Dorian came down the steep rocky path towards her ; he was walking quicker than he usually did, jumping over the stones in a most active manner.

He had known Katherine Farnham exactly a week, but a week in a dull hotel amid lovely scenery is longer than an ordinary one spent elsewhere. People become acquainted sooner beneath one roof in a very small Italian town, than under ordinary circumstances. It is not to be wondered at therefore, that when somebody turns up to whom they can speak without pointing and uplifting eyebrows, that the acquaintance thrives, and a friendship of a week is equal to that of a year anywhere else.

Dorian, as I have already said, hurried down the pathway, and threw himself down beside Katherine, and began playing with the contents of her paint box.

"How well you paint," he said, because it was the first thing that came into his head. "Is that the hotel?" he put out one finger to point, missed his aim, causing his cuff to smudge the building in question.

"Oh! look, you have spoilt it," cried Katherine piteously, surveying the smudge ruefully with a contraction of her pretty brows.

"Oh! I am so sorry, what a clumsy fool I am, I have spoilt it after all your trouble, and all because of that confounded hotel." Norrys' face expressed something more than mere concern.

"It does not matter; it is really of no consequence," said Katherine sweetly (how many thousands of people say the same thing when they feel inclined to vent their wrath on the offender in a very different way!) Not that Katherine felt so towards Dorian, she rather enjoyed hearing the apologies, and the delightfully angry way in which he blamed himself, so she flushed prettily, painted over the smudge, and smiled at him, saying for the fiftieth time that it did not matter, that she had intended to destroy it any how, it was so badly done.

He grew comforted at her repeated assurances, and watched her white fingers as they deftly handled the brush. Dorian could not have been called a flirt, and Katherine was disappointed if she expected him to utter pretty speeches; he had never had the opportunity of being one, he did not take any particular pleasure in the little game, because once and only once he had been vanquished in it; he had thought that he could amuse himself, and found that it was not he who was flirting, but somebody else that was flirting with him, which was a different matter altogether. He did not take enough interest in the human race to make a pastime of it, and was naturally angry to find that other people did, and that he, instead of victimizing as he fondly believed was the case—happened himself to be the victim.

After all, what is a man, clever though he be, in the toils of a pretty woman? He may flirt with her, it is true, and perhaps for a time his own conceit will carry him through a great deal, but in the end she will surely triumph. Of course I am not speaking of every woman, for some can neither attract attention, nor, when they receive it, know how to take it as it is meant, but flounder hopelessly in a sea of entanglement and misunderstanding. But a woman with beauty, wit, and eyesight, with the knowledge of the use of each, surely she is far more clever, more subtle, more deceiving, more finished in the art of deceit, of scheming—of moving heaven and earth for the success of her plans—than any one man on the face of the earth.

It never occurred to Dorian that Katherine might be a flirt, simply because he liked her and did not wish to think so, and for another reason, he had never been thrown in with young ladies of her type. The somebody who had played in that deadly little game with him, had not resembled Katherine in anything, excepting character,

therefore it never entered Dorian's head that she should be like her at all. He fought shy of Vere Lorimer, because somehow her frank grey eyes reminded him vividly of another pair of grey eyes that had played anything but frankly with him. So now he found himself continually on the look out for the red sunshade and the golden head that it shaded.

"You really must let me hold that for you," he said at last, taking as he spoke, the sunshade from her hand, which entailed his moving a little nearer to prevent the sun from shining on her paper.

Miss Farnham relinquished it readily, "That is much better," she observed, "my work will get on faster now, without that horrid thing." So Dorian held the sunshade, and Katherine painted, now and then pausing to survey her handiwork, and asking Dorian's opinion as to whether the church tower was quite straight, or the sea too blue, and the olives the exact shade of green. Occasionally Norrys made suggestions, but on the whole agreed that it was quite lovely.

"I almost wish I knew how to paint," he said, as his eye wandered over the blue rippling bay and the wooded mountains. "I should like my mother to have a picture of this lovely view, but a photograph never does justice to scenery, although it very often considerably improves mankind."

"It would give me the greatest pleasure to paint her a few little sketches, if you really think she would like it, only I paint so badly," Katherine answered readily.

"Would you really? My mother would be delighted, to say nothing of me," Dorian returned with real gratitude in his tone.

"Very well then," said Katherine softly, "I shall begin at once, but they will be for you too, to remind you of—of these—of this week—which I at least have enjoyed so much!" She played her magnificent blue eyes up and down his face, the whole of her lovely features radiant with swift sweet smiles.

Dorian felt dazzled, as Katherine meant that he should; almost unknowingly he put out his hand until it rested on hers.

"I too have enjoyed it, why leave me out, why cannot it last longer—for ever?" Even his mellow baritone fell almost to a whisper. Katherine could hardly conceal her satisfaction, her smiles had not been altogether wasted after all.

"Nothing lasts for ever, Mr. Dorian, every thing must come to an

end—unfortunately for the nice things. But you were saying you would like to be able to paint, I am very glad you cannot. I hold artists in contempt, they are always in brown velveteens, a thing I detest for a man; they wear long hair and drooping moustaches. Oh! artists are detestable," she made a little grimace as she spoke, that caused Norrys to feel devoutly thankful that he had not been endowed with artistic talents. Henceforth he would look upon all artists as beings apart, not to be tolerated for a moment, and this was the man that cared not for the fairer sex, he who would have laughed to scorn anyone who dared to tell him that he was in love with Katherine Farnham.

"If you do paint something for my mother, it is only fair that I should take upon myself the privilege of holding aloft the red ensign," remarked Norrys, waving the article in question about somewhat wildly in the air.

"Yes, I must find out what view Mrs. Dorian would like; why, here she is, I do declare. I thought she never went out without you," cried Katherine, as the Bath-chair with Vere Lorimer behind it, appeared on the road above them.

"So did I," said Dorian, more surprised than he cared to own; that anyone should take his place behind his mother's chair was unheard of, and that it should be Vere Lorimer too—he would rather it had been Katherine.

"Why, mother, this is a surprise!" he said, as they came up the steep path. "Miss Lorimer, surely you must be tired: you must allow me to take your place at once." But Vere demurred.

"I am quite well able to do it, Mr. Dorian, thank you; indeed you shall not," as Dorian put his hand on the handle, "that is unless your mother would rather."

"No, indeed!" said the invalid decidedly, "she does it very nicely, Norrys, I feel quite independent of you already." Dorian stepped back at once.

"Where is Katherine?" asked Mrs. Lorimer. She was walking beside the chair, and now it suddenly occurred to her that her niece had been absent some time.

"She is sketching below," returned Dorian, and as he spoke he glanced at his mother. A frown, half pettish, half impatient, wrinkled the invalid's brow, and for the first time it occurred to Dorian that his mother did not like Miss Farnham.

CHAPTER IV.

DRIVEN TO BAY.

WHEN Dorian took his place at the table d'hôte that evening he became aware that a new comer sat opposite him—next to Katherine Farnham—and somehow he felt put out that the stranger should sit next her, because, besides belonging to the male sex, he was decidedly good-looking—an Italian evidently; one could hardly have mistaken him for anything else. The rather small, well-cut features, clear olive-tinted skin, and large, wide, slightly deep-set brown eyes, golden in some lights, black in others, unmistakably betrayed his nationality. A heavy, dark, drooping moustache concealed the one bad feature of his face, namely, the rather weak and decidedly ill-tempered mouth. Dorian felt he would be not only a dangerous but an unpleasant rival to have; and he watched him narrowly as Katherine came swiftly down the room, her silk skirt rustling, her white arms bare, her lovely face looking still more beautiful, if possible, by the mellow lamp-light. Was it his fancy, he wondered, or did she give a little start of surprise as she took her seat and her quick, blue eyes ran quickly over the face of the stranger?

"There is one thing," thought Norrys, a slight smile of satisfaction circling his lip, "she can't speak a word of Italian, and he probably does not understand English." But he was destined to disappointment, for even as the thought crossed his mind the dark stranger turned his deep, melancholy eyes on Katherine, and in good, although rather stilted, English asked if she would mind passing him the salt—this was the beginning of their conversation.

The noise made by the clatter of knives and forks, to say nothing of the Germans, prevented Dorian from hearing what they were conversing about, but every now and then a word or two reached him. Yes, they were talking about music, that was clear, also painting. Could he believe his ears, Katherine was praising artists.

"Yes," he heard her say, as a lull came for a minute from the rest of the table; "yes, I do so like to see a man sketching on a warm day; it shows he has something else to interest him besides cigars, and whiskey, and sodas."

Here the conversation was lost amidst others, but once Dorian

heard Katherine's voice exclaim : "Oh, how nice ; yes, I go every morning to the Old Fort, perhaps——." Here a plate fell to the floor with a clatter, and he heard no more. Dorian ate his dinner silently, for his mother was chatting away to Mrs. Lorimer, and Vere appeared engrossed by her next neighbour, a fat old German lady, who talked away excitedly in broken English.

Norrys felt out of temper. The roast beef was uneatable, the chicken all legs, and as for the pastry, why, one might as well eat boot leather at once. How beastly hot the room was becoming too, the light so bad, and the oil smelt horrible ; why could they not have decent hotels, and what was more, decent people in them, it was abominable ; you meet all sorts of people abroad, pick-pockets, and swindlers, especially in Italy. Bah ! he had no patience with it all. Why, that fellow opposite might be an escaped convict, for all the innocent girl beside him knew ; he wondered that Mrs. Lorimer did not interfere, but some people were so careless. So ran Dorian's thoughts, and when they rose from the table he was in anything but a pleasant temper.

As he passed through the hall a letter lying on the table attracted his attention ; on looking at it he perceived that it was addressed to "Conte Francesco Riccino," and a minute afterwards Dorian saw the dark stranger take up the letter on his way to the smoking-room, and presently come out, and passing down the steps disappear into the darkness outside. Almost as he did so somebody came swiftly down the stairs, and as Dorian moved to one side he came face to face with Katherine. She had thrown a cloak over her thin evening blouse, and appeared to be just going out. By an almost irresistible impulse Dorian stepped quickly before her, completely barring her way. On seeing him she started nervously, while a vivid colour swept over her face.

"Oh ! it is you," she said, with a hurried catch in her breath.

"Yes, it most certainly is ; can I do anything for you ?" returned Dorian, his grey eyes regarding her sternly and searchingly from beneath the straight dark brows, which were contracted sharply together.

"No, oh ! no. I am only going out to get a breath of air ; it is such a perfect night, is it not ?" Katherine had recovered herself somewhat, although, had Dorian but known it, she was trembling all over.

"You are not going out alone, and at this time of night?" he asked, quickly, without moving out of her way.

"Yes, and why not, pray? Anyhow, it is not for you to question me; please let me pass."

A flash of sudden passion lighted up the girl's eyes. Dorian moved back a step, but his eyes seemed to hold her. "Katherine, only one word," but she started as if terror-struck, while a deadly pallor spread itself over her face.

"Leave me, you shall not detain me a moment longer," she said, speaking in a low, constrained tone; and for another minute Dorian stood motionless, then turned and entered his mother's room.

Meanwhile, Katherine half ran, half walked along the narrow stone-paved street, until she had left the walls on either side and reached the broad deserted Cornichi road. There was a worried and almost angry expression in her flashing blue eyes, while a hot colour flooded her face and brow; she wore no hat, and the night breeze blew her golden hair until it framed her face in a sort of halo.

"At last! I thought you were never coming," said a voice quite near, and Conte Francesco Riccino came suddenly out of the shadow and joined her.

"It was all I could do to get here," said Katherine, in a voice that was half sullen, half weary; the colour had faded from her cheeks, and her fresh beautiful face looked suddenly pale and worn, but the feverish light still burnt in her eyes, and again the nervous trembling overtook her. "Why will you not leave me alone? Why did you follow me here? It was all I could do to keep up a conversation at dinner, the strain was awful," she went on, hurriedly, her blue eyes restlessly scanning the face of the man before her.

"I thought you would not be over pleased to see me, that is partly the reason of my coming, but I also do not choose that my wife—my wife, mind you—shall flirt with everyone she meets."

Katherine's face blanched and looked ghastly in the cold wan light of the moon, which was bathing all in a silvery mantle.

"I suppose you have forgotten the fact that you are no longer free to play with the affections of every stranger," he continued, "but, unfortunately for me perhaps, I cannot forget that you belong to me, for better for worse, for richer for poor."

His voice was singularly calm and collected for one of his fiery

temperament, but it was only the calmness of fierce passion before it bursts its bonds, before all control is lost. Riccino was doing his best to curb himself, because in a sort of wild mad way he did love this fair-haired, blue-eyed English girl, and he was sorry for anyone when his temper really got the better of him.

"I have not been playing with anyone, as you call it, I never do; I——" Katherine broke off from sheer inability to proceed further; she was trembling so violently that she would have fallen, had not Riccino caught her and held her firmly, against her will.

"You may as well make up your mind to listen to what I have to say," he went on, still in the same quiet, steady tone. "Do you remember that day in Rome, in the church of Santa Margaritta, when the padre was so old and infirm that he could hardly read the marriage service, or join our hands together?"

Here Katherine shivered.

"Or join our hands together," repeated Riccino. "Our hands, our hearts, as I fondly believed then, were joined however, and we were man and wife. Do you still remember the vestry? I do; it was a small, bare room. I can see you now as you looked then, in your white cotton summer dress, and large white hat with the drooping feather that fell over your yellow hair; and I, poor deluded fool that I was, thought you were the most beautiful creature that God ever made. I remember how your eyes sparkled, and how the colour came into your cheeks, and how——" here his voice grew hoarse, and a slight trembling ran through it—"and how you came up to me and laid your head, your lovely golden head on my breast, and said, while your blue eyes looked into mine: 'Francesco, I love you, I am yours now for ever, remember, for ever,' those were your very words, they are written on my heart. Have you remembered, Katherine? Answer me. Have you remembered?"

He almost threw her from him as he uttered the last word, every feature of his white, haggard face worked convulsively, and his dark eyes seemed to burn into hers.

"It's a lie, a cruel lie; oh! it is cruel, cruel of you," cried Katherine hysterically. "I never loved you, and—and—I hate—hate and loathe you now."

The very sight of her agonized, beautiful, fair face, seemed to goad him to desperation; with one bound he caught her in his arms, and held her white slender wrists in a vice-like clasp.

"You do, do you, you vile, heartless woman, with your fair face and black soul; very well then, hate me as you will, I will have none of you, but the whole world shall know of your sin, your children shall, one day, blush for their golden haired angel of a mother, but by — you shall not escape me; this very night you leave this place with me. Who should be a more fit companion for you than your own lawful husband? Do you hear? Go back to the hotel, pack what you want, and I will wait for you." Riccino loosened the clasp of his arms, and with a low moan, Katherine fell to the ground, a shapeless mass of tumbled clothes, but the moon still shone on her golden hair, and it glittered like burnished gold.

"Not to-night, oh! not to-night," came faintly at last.

"And why, pray; you have not yet finished with that luckless Englishman, I suppose?" said Riccino savagely. "But very well, you shall not go to-night, on second thoughts it is best not. I will give you a week—not a minute over; and in the meantime I will watch you as a cat watches a mouse; but in a week's time, whether you like it or not, you will leave this place with me." And Katherine knew that he meant what he said. One more effort she made, but only one.

"And suppose I refuse, suppose I will not go with you?" she faltered unsteadily.

"Then I shall go to your aunt and claim you openly, and the news of your clandestine marriage will be all over England, and your name will be bandied from mouth to mouth," and without another word Riccino turned and vanished in the darkness, leaving Katherine to find her way back to the hotel as best she might.

CHAPTER V:

IL DIAVOLO.

MRS. LORIMER was energetic; she was one of those wiry little women who can stand any amount of exertion without being in the least over-done; her bright, deep set eyes saw everything, and her tongue often ran away with her; but then she was exactly the sort of person to travel with, as she never grumbled at small worries, and could put up cheerfully with any amount of inconvenience. It was she who planned the excursion up to Ruta, a village situated on the

ridge of the mountains, and having a most lovely view of the whole coast line as far as Genoa ; while at the back stretched the bare, and sometimes snow-clad peaks of the Appennines. Riccino was to be of the party. Dorian felt ridiculously annoyed when he heard it ; for a minute he said angrily to himself that he would not go, but soon dismissed that thought as absurd.

On the appointed day two carriages drove up to the hotel door, a landau which held four, and a one horse victoria with only two seats. While Dorian was helping his mother into the former, Katherine ran down the hotel steps followed by Riccino, and, without a word between them, both got into the victoria.

A quick frown gathered on Dorian's brow ; somehow the very sight of Katherine in her neat tailor-made gown, her golden hair glittering beneath the narrow brim of her straw hat, irritated him beyond measure, he did not glance in her direction again, but stood silently holding open the carriage door, while Mrs. Lorimer and Vere got in, and then took the vacant place on the front seat beside Vere. The girl wondered secretly at her companion, wondered at his silence and abstracted expression, but she made no remark and silently gazed at the view, while her mother and the invalid chatted together, and Dorian seemed completely absorbed in contemplation of his walking stick.

On went the carriage, the victoria bowling along in front ; still, neither Vere nor Dorian broke the silence.

"I am afraid I am an exceedingly dull companion, Miss Lorimer," he said at length. "But I know so very little about this part of the world that I shan't be able to afford you much information."

"Oh, no ! don't bother to talk, please," began Vere abruptly, and then she suddenly became aware that she had said an extremely foolish thing, and flushed hotly as she met the gaze of Dorian's earnest grey eyes. But he did not answer ; he did not even hear what she had said, simply because he was listening feverishly to Katherine's clear, ringing laugh in the distance.

At last the drive was ended, their destination was reached and they alighted at the hotel entrance. Mrs. Lorimer, followed by Vere, went in to order tea to be ready when they came back from their explorations, and Dorian went quickly up to Katherine, who was leaning in a desultory fashion against the carriage door.

"Miss Farnham," his voice was low and constrained, "I hear the

view is very fine from that clump of pines over there. Will you walk with me, or are you tired?"

"Tired? what an idea," said Katherine, gaily. "Yes, I should love to come, I daresay the others will follow." So the two walked off, and Riccino stood watching their retreating figures with a queer expression on his dark features.

"Il Diavolo," he murmured under his breath.

Katherine, in spite of her ready acquiescence to accompany him, avoided the steady, searching gaze of his eyes, and for a few minutes all her powers of conversation absolutely forsook her; she could find nothing to say to that tall figure at her side. And Dorian, too, was silent, busily intent on digging holes in the ground with his stick. At length Katherine broke the silence by a nervous little cough; she felt shaken and unstrung, and this silence was unbearable.

"You seem lost in thought," she said sharply, "and are anything but an amusing companion."

"No, I do not feel particularly lively," returned Dorian, with a sort of determination to be as disagreeable as he could.

"That means you are depressed, I suppose?" She tried to make her voice sound indifferent, but it was such a miserable failure that Norrrys turned abruptly and confronted her.

"Katherine, what is the matter? Tell me, for I will know."

"Matter! What could be the matter? Nothing at all." With an effort she forced herself to speak naturally, and smiled one of her usual brilliant smiles, while her blue eyes sought his coquettishly, but with more expression than she had any idea of.

"Then what are you doing? Are you trying to wreck two lives; do you enjoy seeing me miserable?"

Dorian turned towards her, his face drawn and stern with mingled pain and anger. Katherine felt that he must read her very soul, she recoiled a pace, but he took her hand and held it tightly.

"Tell me once for all, which do you love—that fellow," with a backward jerk of his head, "that fellow or me? Come; you shall choose once and for all. Do you understand what I say? I am in earnest."

She hardly needed words to let her know that he was indeed in earnest, and Katherine was frightened; this was not the sort of love-making she liked, and besides, supposing—she glanced nervously

round—if *he* should come. Dorian's stern, unflinching gaze was becoming unbearable, and her hand ached in his vice-like grip.

"Let me go," she said, her voice as steady as she could make it. "You have no right to question me like this, one might think I had really been guilty of encouraging you."

"And what else have you been doing all these days?" Have you not led me to think that my attentions were not disagreeable to you, have you not given me just cause to let me think you cared for me? You will probably deny that, but it is the truth."

"I do deny it, it is shameful. How dare you speak to me so? Let me go, let me go at once." Her voice rose almost to a cry, and a ghastly shade overspread her face. Dorian drew back with an involuntary exclamation of surprise, just as Riccino and Mrs. Lorimer turned the corner of the path.

The rest of the day passed uneventfully, neither Dorian or Katherine spoke to each other; if anyone noticed their silence, no remark was made, and on their homeward drive Dorian accompanied Mrs. Lorimer in the victoria, and to tell the truth he was not sorry to escape the necessity of sitting opposite Katherine in the landau, and to feel his mother's inquisitive gaze bent on him. It was a relief to be able to sit back and let somebody else do the talking, while they rattled down the hard, white road, with its fringe of olive trees; the sea blue and calm beneath them, the setting sun shedding a soft yellow radiance over all.

CHAPTER VI.

A TERRIBLE PARTING.

"Miss LORIMER can I speak to you."

Dorian stood in the doorway of the salon, his face grey and haggard. Vere rose quickly, and put down her book. It was a little after nine o'clock on the evening of the next day, and most of the occupants of the hotel were congregated in the public salon, either reading, writing, or working. Dorian saw that Katherine and Riccino were sitting side by side on the sofa, apparently engrossed with each other; but he felt no pang of jealousy just then; his eyes sought Vere's, and there was a deep indescribable anguish in them.

"Yes, what is it?" asked Vere, shocked by the deathly paleness and rigidity of his face.

"My mother has one of her bad attacks, she will sink under it. I have always known she must sooner or later, but she would like to see you." He spoke slowly, in strange, quiet, distinct tones. The colour faded from the girl's face, and her clear eyes grew wide with horror:

"Oh! no," she said, with a little catch in her breath. "Oh! no—surely it is not as bad as that! Indeed, I will come at once," and she followed him along the dimly lighted passage without another word, until the door of Mrs. Dorian's room was reached, and then Dorian laid his hand on her arm as she would have entered.

"Don't be frightened, but she is terribly altered; you know it is her heart; are you ready? shall we go in?"

Vere nodded assent; but her heart beat with a sort of undefined fear. Mrs. Dorian lay on her bed fully dressed, with simply a railway rug thrown over her, but her face had altered indeed.

Vere drew a quick gasping breath that made Dorian look at her hastily and take her little cold hand in his, and gently lead her up to the bedside. For a minute the two stood looking down on the motionless, almost lifeless form beneath the rug: the thin delicate face of the sick woman was tinged with a ghastly ashen pallor, the cheeks seemed to have sunk in like those of an old woman, leaving deep lines and hollows, while her fair flaxen hair had turned nearly white; there was something almost unearthly in that shrunken wizened face.

"Mother she is here, I have brought her to see you." Dorian spoke in a low, soft voice, full of inexpressible sorrow and sweetness. Mrs. Dorian moved slightly, and gave a faint groan of pain as she did so.

"Vere, my dear—dear child, I am dying," her voice sounded far away, so thin and weak had it grown.

"Oh! no, dear Mrs. Dorian, don't, don't say that," cried the girl, with a sort of shocked pain filling her young voice, "you will get better, indeed you will."

"No, I shall not get better this time," the invalid's voice rose a little: "Vere, my child, you have been very good—to—" then her heavy yellow lids lifted suddenly, disclosing bulged and widely extended pupils.

"Oh! oh! Norrys, the pain, the pain—I can't bear it, help me, help me!" she shrieked, rising from her pillows and throwing both her arms out towards him. Without a word he folded his arms around her, and then there was silence. The sick woman lay battling with the frightful pain, her face growing greyer every minute, while Dorian, his strong face set in iron, held her—his dark brows closely knitted, his lips compressed in rigid lines. As for Vere, the girl hardly dared to breathe: her hand clutched tightly at the iron bed post, her large grey eyes extended with awe and horror.

At last Mrs. Dorian seemed to rally, as the pain subsided her hands relaxed their hold, and with a sigh she fell back on her pillow. "Quick," she said drawing Dorian towards her, "Quick, before it comes again. Norrys, listen to me, a dying woman; have no faith in her you love. Yes, I know, but she is false—false—" here her strength failed her, and with a little gasp she fell back, and for the minute Vere thought all was over. But gradually consciousness returned, and this time her drawn haggard eyes sought Vere's.

"My dear," she said, motioning Dorian away, "Be kind to him, he will have no one when—when I'm gone, promise me, promise me to be good to him—my boy—don't—don't let her," Mrs. Dorian paused, and Dorian took the girl's arm and pulled her gently away.

"You had better not stay," he said kindly, "It is too much for you," but she shook her head.

"I will stay as long as she wants me," and just then Mrs. Dorian beckoned her to come closer:

"You have not promised me, Vere," she faltered in a low pitifully weak voice, and Vere promised, while her slender figure shook, and a mist rose before her eyes, blinding out everything.

All through that long miserable night the girl sat beside the bed, her hand locked in that of the sick woman. Daylight came at last. Soon the sun, the bright radiant Italian sun would be shining down upon the little bay, fluttering in between the window blinds with a mocking dazzling light. Dorian went to the window, and pressed his brown cheek against the pane. Outside the blue waters danced and sparkled: inside all was grey gloom. Day had dawned, and with it came the hum of life: aboard the fishing smacks the lateen sails were being hoisted, mules were being harnessed for their day's work, voices began to be heard through the clear morning air.

Dorian turned away and his gaze met that of Vere's; the look in her grey eyes went to his heart, so full was it of a sort of dumb misery and entreaty: her hand was still clasped in his mother's, she was chained to her post.

"You are tired. Oh! you must be very tired?" he began full of remorse, as he noted afresh her pale cheeks and the weary droop of her head.

"No, only a little, you have had no sleep at all either," she said gently.

"I am sorry for you, oh! so sorry," she held out her other hand with a gesture of sympathy, that touched him strangely for a moment. At last Vere was released, and as she stole away to get the food and rest of which she was so sorely in need, Dorian fell on his knees beside the bed: how long he knelt he hardly knew.

He did not look up as Vere entered some hours later; the girl paused, awe struck on the threshold, not daring to intrude on his great sorrow. Could she but have comforted him! If she could only have helped him to bear his pain! Then she thought of Katherine, how much better if it had been her, she would have been able to comfort him surely—because—because—he loved her so.

"Is that you? Yes! she is still unconscious," said Dorian rising and answering her unspoken question. "Won't you sit here, I am afraid I have taken your place." He moved away, but Vere interposed:

"Oh! stay there please, but first of all may I not get you something—some hot coffee, you will be worn out, oh! please let me?" She looked up in his face, with passionate sorrow and longing in her eyes, but Dorian shook his head.

"I want nothing, thank you; it will soon be over now."

"Soon over, what do you mean?" faltered Vere.

"I mean that she can't last much longer, like that, soon her pain will be over, she is sinking fast, can you not see?" and Vere as she glanced at the bed, felt that it would be better so. She did not speak, but her eyes filled with tears and her lips quivered, not so much on account of the dying woman, but because Dorian's stern despairing face broke her heart, there was a sort of dumb animal pain in his deep earnest eyes.

"Norrys!" Mrs. Dorian's voice broke the stillness.

"Mother!"

Dorian was bending over her, his lips against her cheek. "Is the pain better now, dear," he said gently, but almost as he spoke, the grey death tint spread over the worn face :

"It—it has come again ; I am dying, no, don't look like that my poor boy," then turning to Vere : "Dear, I saw you although I could not speak, you have been very good to me child, oh !" A piercing shiek rang through the room : "The pain, Norrys, the pain," faltered the dying woman.

"Yes, mother, I am here, I will not leave you," he said soothingly. He took her frail body in his strong arms, and held her against his breast ; while every minute her face grew more livid, until the ashen hue of death came over it.

"Vere"—Dorian still had thought for the trembling girl—"go, this is no place for you, do you hear me ?" and Vere did not dare demur : she bent her curly head and pressed a fluttering little kiss on Mrs. Dorian's hand, and then she went swiftly from the room, not stopping until she reached her own boudoir, and there the long enforced calm gave way, the strain had been too much for her ; she burst into a fit of wild hysterical crying, as she threw herself on the bed.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BITTER CUP.

MRS. DORIAN was dead, and a gloomy silence pervaded the hotel. The chambermaid moved about with noiseless footsteps, the *propriétaire* conversed in the hall in lower tones, even the waiters tried not to make too much clatter with the knives and forks, as they went in and out of the dining-room. Vere lay on her bed upstairs quite worn out, Mrs. Lorimer reclined on hers likewise, but from a different cause ; she was crying bitterly.

"Riccinò" had taken advantage of the general disturbance that Mrs. Dorian's death had created, to carry off Katherine, and now all that remained of her was a note lying on the hall table directed to "N. Dorian, Esq." Dorian took it up mechanically, as the waiter handed it to him. He was not altered, because his sunburnt skin did not brook much alteration, and only the lines around his lips, which had grown harder and sterner the last few days, told that

things had not gone smoothly with him. Now he slowly opened Katherine's note, and glanced down at the large flowery characters. It was dated the same day as his mother's death, and ran as follows:—

“Dear Mr. Dorian,—

First allow me to condole with you on your poor mother's illness, may it turn out better than every one seems to expect; and secondly I think it only fair to write to you and let you know, that by the time you read this I shall be many miles away. It is unlucky perhaps for both of us that we met. But as for me, well! I have made my bed and so I must lie on it; for you it is different, you have your life before you, may I hope it will not turn out such a failure as mine has done. Perhaps we may meet hereafter. Is it a vain wish on my part that the remembrance of these last few weeks may prove as pleasant to you, as they are to me?

Believe me,

Yours very truly,

KATHERINE RICCINO.”

Dorian knew as well as possible that the whole tone of this letter was cruel, but he had passed through too much lately to writhe under it, as Katherine had hoped that he would. He folded it up carefully, put it in his breast pocket and then left the hotel. Had his heart been made of stone he could hardly have felt less than he did; presently he would wake up to what had happened, but as yet no passionate anger rose in his heart against the girl who had misled and deceived him. Whatever happened now could hardly make much difference to him either way; for the time his senses were numbed as it were, nothing had power to rouse or hurt.

At last Dorian awoke to the fact that he had reached the old fort, and throwing himself down on the grass full length, he covered his eyes with his hand to shut out the glare of the sun. Below the blue water rippled lazily, and above the sky was a blue cloudless vault far as eye could reach, then suddenly Dorian remembered that the last time he had been there, Katherine had been near him; he had watched the sun shining on her golden hair, and the quick movements of her small white hand as it handled the brush. How her blue eyes had flashed and smiled at him, and he poor fool had basked happily in the sunshine of her presence, a believing, miserably believing fool. The truth seemed now to rush

upon him, he had been deceived, played with, thrown over; and his mind flew back to the Oxford days, when the whole of his boyish heart had been given to just such another. And now he had no one, his faith in women had been cruelly shaken. His mother, whom he had loved and tended for five years, was gone. In the future he might, and would, live for himself alone. The world had not dealt kindly with him; to him it seemed as though he had failed in everything, utterly failed.

How long he lay motionless on the short dry grass, he hardly knew; when he rose he had settled to leave Rapallo on the next day. He had no thought of following Katherine. His love for her—if love it was, had been sorely bruised—he could hardly have dared to see her again, he sincerely hoped he never should. Was he not jealous? A vague feeling that he ought to be possessed him, but he felt too coldly indifferent to be capable of any feeling at all.

When Mrs. Lorimer heard that he was going, she fully approved of the resolution.

"There is nothing to keep you here," she said mournfully, extending her hand. Katherine's behaviour had completely shattered her, and her brown little face looked thin and wizened.

"I thought she loved you, but alas! she is incapable of loving anyone, but how could she have done it, how could she?" It was not likely that Dorian could answer this, so he said nothing.

"And Vere, poor Vere, she is so upset. Yes, we are leaving shortly. Perhaps we may meet again one day. Good-bye Mr. Dorian, take care of yourself, for you look completely knocked up." Dorian pressed her hand, while he said earnestly—

"Good-bye, Mrs. Lorimer, please remember me to your daughter, and thank her for all she has done. I am sure she was a great comfort to my mother, yes, I hope sincerely we may meet again," and in a minute he was gone—gone from the place where his hopes had been shattered, gone from his mother's grave beneath the olive trees, and the warm soft rays of the Italian sun.

CHAPTER VIII.

SHADOWS OF THE PAST.

It was the first day of June, a hot, cloudless, stifling day, when the sun shines down through a thick yellow haze, and the blue of the sky is obscured by the smoke-laden atmosphere. Yet London is looking its best just now: the trees and flowers in the park are refreshed after the rain, and the dust is mercifully laid in the streets. The ceaseless roar of the traffic fills the air, while the pavements are thronged with the fashionable and unfashionable crowd, and the tops of the omnibuses are crammed. Beautiful carriages, with their prancing thoroughbreds, mingle with the endless string of hansoms and four-wheelers. It is the "season," and everybody who is "anybody" is in town.

A neat, well-appointed carriage stands before one of the largest houses in Grosvenor Place, the windows and balconies of which are gay with flowers, and dainty silk and muslin curtains. Upstairs, in the large, luxurious drawing-room, seated near the open window, are two women; the heat is great even in this shaded room, but the roar of the surging life outside can only be indistinctly heard.

"By the way; have you seen Norrys Dorian? You know that he is in town, I suppose?" questioned one of the women.

Katherine Farnham is hardly recognisable—the slim girl has developed into a tall, handsome woman, more beautiful now than she ever was, but the bright vivacity that characterised her has given place to indifference. Her face is no longer that of a girl—light-hearted and careless. It is the face, now, of the cold, cruel society machine, a face embittered by suffering, scornful and hardened. Her beautiful figure is well set off in the dress of pale grey cloth, with its costly gold embroidery; the golden hair is piled in fashionable profusion beneath the large black lace hat: the sun glints on the jewels that weigh down the small, white, restless hands, and on the delicate shoes with their tiny diamond buckles.

"I did not know that Mr. Dorian was in town," returned Miss Lorimer. She is surprised, although her small, pale face shows nothing of it.

"He is very much in town, putting on lots of swagger, I daresay. He can afford it now, with his ten-thousand a year. I am rather

looking forward to meeting him again." Katherine laughs, and her blue eyes gleam dangerously.

"Are you?" says Vere; her tones are quite unconcerned, utterly indifferent.

"Well, I must be off, as I can't persuade you to come with me. Lord Northwell will be the gainer, as he will probably occupy your seat."

"He is welcome to it." Vere extended her hand, and drew up her slight figure. For a moment Katherine held the hand, and scanned the owner curiously.

"Vere, you are altered, I hardly know you," she said abruptly. "Where has all your childishness disappeared to?"

"One does not stay a child for ever," was the response, as she rose to ring the bell. Katherine did not wait, but with an airy nod swept from the room, and Vere listened to the carriage wheels until they were lost to sound.

Then she walked mechanically across the room, a small slender figure in her white Indian embroidered muslin; perhaps she had altered more than Katherine in one way, because the frank childish eyes had lost their brightness, and no longer lit up with girlish enthusiasm: they were weary, languid, and indifferent, the slight shade of purple beneath, lightened and deepened their grey depths. The lips were discontented and dissatisfied looking, the fresh roses of early girlhood had flown from her cheeks, leaving them pale. Vere was much admired, her pale face and large grey eyes were called "*spirituelle*," her languid indifference "*interesting*."

This was her second season, the second summer they had occupied the handsome house in Grosvenor Place.

"What is there to-night? Oh! I hope there is nothing on to-night," she thought wearily, and she crossed the room to the writing table, over which hung an ivory engagement card with a narrow silver rim. "Thursday!" Vere hastily ran her finger along the line; her heart sank as she read: "Ball at the Russian Embassy. Dining at Lady Castletons. Garden Party at Henley." The last had a line through it, but the other two the girl knew she was bound to attend.

Vere was still standing staring at the card, when Mrs. Lorimer rustled into the room: she looked as well as it is possible for a dragged-out society hack to look in the hottest summer weather.

"Ah! here you are, Vere, come, if we are going for a turn in the park before Mrs. Vanduleer's squash, we must hurry."

"I forgot," returned the girl, in a sort of dazed way as she put her hand to her head, and pushed back the dark hair from her forehead. In another ten minutes mother and daughter were being driven quickly along the crowded streets.

It was a little after eleven, when Vere followed her mother's lead into the large ball-room of the Russian Embassy. The heat had brought the faintest tinge of colour into her cheeks, and her grey eyes shone with more brilliancy than usual. Suddenly Mrs. Lorimer turned and touched her daughter's arm meaningly, and Vere directed her eyes to where her mother's were fixed.

Standing in the doorway of the second room stood Katherine—she looked radiantly beautiful just then, and her rich dress sparkled with diamonds. Her perfect, faultlessly featured face, was full of animation. Vere gave an involuntary start of surprise: she hardly fancied anyone could be so beautiful. Beside her stood a figure that was strange, yet perfectly familiar. Dorian, tall, handsome, self-possessed and courteous, was talking to her—darker, sterner, and more bronzed than when she had last seen him. Surely he was no longer in love with a woman who had all but jilted him, thrown him carelessly aside; and yet how beautiful, how fascinating Katherine looked now; if he had loved her two years ago surely he must love her double-fold to-night. A rush of passionate anger swept over the younger girl, a burning longing possessed her that Dorian might see her.

And he had done so, he was threading his way through the brilliant crowd, and his hand was out-stretched towards her. But Vere was angry, miserably, torturingly jealous; she hated Dorian at that moment, her pride was sorely wounded, why had he never called, never sought her out—never even written? So now, just because her heart was beating violently, because for the last two years she had been longing for Dorian, longing to hear his deep mellow voice, to see his tall figure, and deep earnest eyes, she raised her own, bright and shining, but without the slightest gleam of recognition—her face pale, every muscle quivering, her voice freezingly cold and formal, just because she could hardly force herself to speak at all.

"Surely I am not mistaken? Miss Lorimer, don't you know me."

"I—I beg your pardon. I really can't recall. Is it—are you Mr. . . . Dorian?" she raised her eyebrows slightly, just enough to express the languid indifference which she felt. Dorian stepped back, the light fading from his eyes.

"Two years is a long time certainly, Miss Lorimer, and Rapallo seems to have melted from the world. May I hope for the pleasure of a dance?" His voice was as cold and formal as hers had been now. Vere smiled, a slow curving of her lips was all it could be called.

"So sorry, not one left, so sorry, you know?" and she was whirled away by another partner, while Dorian stood transfixed from sheer astonishment. Was that the girl who had sat at his mother's bedside, that the frank child of two years ago? Stunned and bewildered he wandered out into the hall, and sought refuge in the smoking room, from the hundred smiling mammas and slangy daughters. Katherine had surprised and astonished him; he had not expected to see her, but Vere had wounded and hurt him in a way she little guessed.

CHAPTER IX.

A FALSE STEP.

"Yes!" Miss Lorimer was at home, so Dorian followed the powdered headed flunkey up the wide softly carpeted staircase, and into the drawing-room. But Katherine, not Vere, rose to meet him, a beautiful smiling Katherine with out-stretched hands. A slow rich colour flooded her fair skin, as she came forward to meet him.

"Ah! it is you," she said softly, and without any embarrassment: "Vere will be here presently, but perhaps you won't mind having to talk to me for a few minutes." Dorian glanced at her gravely, and it was in that steady, half contemptuous stare, that Katherine awoke to the humiliating fact that he no longer loved her.

"You were surprised to meet me the other night, were you not; you are surprised to see me now?" went on Katherine gently. "It is a long time since I saw you—it—it was when your poor mother died."

"Yes." Dorian merely assented to what she said, he made no remarks on it.

"Perhaps you wonder at my being here at all?" she questioned with a little conscious laugh.

"I have given up wondering at anything you do, I think you can hardly hope to surprise a second time." He raised his eyes and regarded her steadily.

"Surprise you, did I ever surprise you? It is so long ago now that I have quite forgotten; by the way have you seen Riccino, he is knocking about somewhere I suppose, but those highly strung men become loving after a time. I came here, he made me positively ill." Katherine glanced up at him with a half triumphant, half insolent expression in her eyes. Dorian rose—his tall figure towering above her, his quiet eyes flashing scorn and contempt, not unmixed with disgust in his voice, as he said coldly:

"I am not here to discuss your husband's merits or his shortcomings, I will call another time in the hope of seeing Miss Lormer." Never had this vain, self-opinionated woman felt smaller and more contemptible than she did then; she quailed under this man's proud disdainful eyes; every vestige of colour left her face, for the moment her self-confidence was shaken, her forces routed.

"I never asked you to," she cried hotly, forgetting her *role* for the moment, and throwing off the calm society manner; the blood rushed to her face with redoubled force, her lips quivered with rage, and burning, furious tears rose in her eyes.

"You need not look quite so contemptuous, you are not such a paragon of virtue yourself that you can look down on me, and what have I done? Did I ever, even then, ever say I loved you? It was you, poor weak fool, that were ready to throw yourself at my feet. Well! I am glad you have so successfully recovered your little *affaires de cœur*." She laughed a low disagreeable laugh.

Just then Vere entered the room. Whether Katherine knew of her entrance it would be hard to say, for with a haughty toss of her head she swept away from him, saying as she did so; "I hope you will recover your second one as easily, I am sure my poor little cousin is quite dying for you," and with a mocking laugh she was gone. For a second Dorian stood speechless, his eyes fastened fixedly on the white immovable face before him. Vere stood like a statue; with an almost super-human effort she withdrew her eyes from him, and came towards him.

"How do you do, Mr. Dorian, you have found time to come and see us, really."

Dorian knew that her self-possession was wonderful, her words were ordinary enough, but her voice vibrated a little. He bowed gravely; for the first time in his life he felt awkward and ill at ease, but there was no embarrassment about Vere now; her small pale face was as rigid and as passionless as marble, she was talking away the whole time of various things—Hurlingham, Ascot, the Countess of So and So's ball, the park, the theatres. Suddenly she stopped, perhaps something in Dorian's eyes arrested her words.

"You have seen Katherine?" she said, fixing her eyes on his face.

"Yes," and then Dorian did the very stupidest thing he could have done; rising he went up to her and suddenly took both her hands almost roughly in his.

"You think I care for her still," he said passionately "I don't, I never loved her, she's false, wicked, despicable. Do you think I could ever forget what you did, your patient devotion to my mother, Vere? Let me show my gratitude somehow! I am yours, if you will marry me?"

With a dry suppressed sob, the girl pushed him away, her small fair face flaming, her eyes gleaming and dilating with passion.

"How dare you, how dare you say such things to me? Do you suppose I would marry you, you of all people? Do you think because Katherine liked, liked being played with, that I like it too? I don't love you, you seem to think that a girl has only to see you to love you. But your conceit has led you too far, I hate you, I—hate you." She was sobbing now, choking scalding sobs of anger. How dare he, how dare he say such things to her; he who had only a moment before been flirting with Katherine, he, who thought she was in love with him. Brushing away the tears from her eyes Vere turned a pale quivering face to his.

"Go, you had better go, before you make things worse; remember for the future not to believe what you hear, there are plenty of people to love you I daresay, people like—Katherine, oh! thousands of them," and with that she rushed from the room, leaving Dorian stunned and horror-stricken at what had happened. What had he done; he hardly knew, he was too bewildered, but then even the very best of men are fools sometimes.

CHAPTER X.

A TWICE TOLD TALE.

JUNE had passed away, and with it, the roses, the strawberries, the budding leaves of early summer; and September had come; the golden tinted leaves were falling, and the ferns and bracken on the moor were becoming brown and copper-coloured. Needless to say the fashionable world had left London! Cowes was over, Henley and Ascot, and all who could were flying northwards, with guns and fishing lines, golf clubs and bicycles. Silks and muslins, shirt fronts, and high hats, had given place to tweeds, and serges, neat felt and sailor hats, caps and tam o'shanter.

Mrs. Lorimer and Vere had flown with the rest. Sir Richard Fanshore's house was always open to his daughter, and his dearly loved grandchild. Vere was the old man's pet, nothing was too good for this darling of his heart. "The Grange" was a delightful house to stay in, just over the Tweed, overshadowed by the Cheviots: it stood in lovely park like grounds, with the wild moorland all around.

At present Mrs. Lorimer and Vere were the only guests; on the morrow some seven or eight men were expected for the shooting, and Dorian amongst them. Vere had not known of his coming in time to prevent it, and now she hardly knew whether she was glad or not.

An hour before the arrivals were expected, Vere donned her short tweed skirt and covert coat, poised a fluffy red Tammy on the top of her brown hair, and started towards the moor with only the dogs for company. How lovely it was, the early Autumn twilight was already sending floating purple shadows across the hills—now casting all into deepest shade, now letting tiny rays of departing sunshine touch the rugged hill top, and brighten the gorse to purest gold. The keen sweet air, laden with the fragrant smell of peat, swept gently across the moor: below in the valley the river rushed along its rocky bed, its waters gleaming black as ink beneath the deep shadow of the rocks, but far in the distance curling on its way like a tiny silver streak.

Vere drunk in the pure air with the keenest delight, as she skipped lightly from tuft to tuft, where the ground grew marshy, now chasing

"Rough" the big collie, or catching up the tiny Yorkshire terrier in her arms and throwing him from her, on to the little boggy heaps, while the rest barked and scampered, enjoying it even more than their mistress. She tried to forget that Dorian was coming, was probably at that very minute driving along the high road from the station. After all he was nothing to her—and she less than nothing to him. So Vere argued with herself, and tried to feel as utterly indifferent as it was possible to feel. At last she knew she must turn, they must all have arrived by this time, and be dressing for dinner. She managed to get to her room, escaping all notice, as she ran through the open morning-room window. Perhaps Vere had never taken so long to dress before, or ever tried her maid's patience more severely as one after another her gowns were tried on and thrown aside.

"I shall not wear my white satin to-night, Margaret," she said decidedly, as she stepped out of the fourth and looked discontentedly around: "It is altogether too pronounced for dinner, and that white Indian silk is perfectly disgusting, the hem is absolutely black. I think I shall wear my old black, the one covered with lace, you know?"

"Yes, Miss," replied the long-suffering maid resignedly, "But it does seem a pity to wear the black, Miss, when the satin shows off your beautiful neck and arms so well."

"Nonsense," answered the girl sharply. "Yes! I shall wear the black."

So the old black lace gown was donned in preference to the gleaming satin, and Vere, as pale as a lily, her grey eyes shining strangely, sailed downstairs, her black lace robe trailing behind her, not a spot of colour anywhere to lighten her sober attire. She entered the drawing-room just as the gong sounded, and heard her mother say:

"Mr. Dorian, will you take my daughter in?" and Dorian, his dark stern face gravely polite, offered her his arm. Vere took it mechanically and without exchanging a single word, not even the commonplace "How d'ye do," followed in the wake of the rest. Dinner passed somehow—how Vere never quite knew. A few remarks on the beauty of the weather, the heather and shooting, etc., were hazarded by Dorian, and received with stony monosyllables by Vere.

Once in the drawing-room the girl forgot both manners and duty. Without a word to anyone she opened the window, and with a long drawn breath of relief stepped out into the cool Autumn night. Above the stars twinkled peacefully, all around the moor lay dark and silent, here and there a tiny flickering light told of some lonely cottage. On went Vere down through the maze of winding shadowy paths, on until the garden was left behind, and she stood alone—a silent black clad figure amidst the surrounding darkness, the deep vault of heaven above her, the fragrant peaty earth beneath her feet. Not a sound broke the stillness, the house was hidden by the tall firs that quite surrounded the garden; she was alone—alone with nature, grand, still and wonderful. Alone with only the stars to watch her path. And Dorian had come, he was really and truly but a little way from her, an inmate of the same house, one of her grandfather's guests, and she—it was her duty to be polite to him, and to entertain him with the others. And yet the last time he had insulted her, grossly insulted her.

A hot flush rose in the girl's pale cheeks, and was fanned away by the gentle night breeze. Suppose he had meant it, suppose—but why should she suppose anything so unlikely? Vere's head drooped, and her slender fingers crushed themselves together. It was hard, hard to think that he loved Katherine, Katherine who cared for no one, not even him, far less for her own husband. Bah! what nonsense she was thinking. He was nothing to her, nothing—she would show him that he was not. Just then Vere turned quickly, surely she heard something. She started to her feet with a sudden terror; somebody was coming over the heather, striding quickly towards her; was it a tramp? and then she felt inclined to laugh aloud. A tramp in irreproachable evening dress, so likely! A nervous tremor seized her: almost unknowingly she sunk back on the grassy mound from which she had risen, and resolutely turned her head away from the quickly approaching figure.

“They told me you had gone out, I have been looking for you everywhere.” The voice was Dorian's. “I can wait no longer, I must, I will know whether you meant what you said the last time we met. Miss Lorimer, surely you have forgiven my blundering idiocy, surely,—surely you have forgiven me now?” Had she?

Vere did not speak; with a great effort she raised her head and looked at him; for a minute Dorian stood and stared at the pale

flower-like up-turned face, at the sad wondering eyes, and the little tremulous mouth.

"Do you believe me, believe that I love you now, better than I have loved anyone before. Believe that I never loved Katherine with the love I offer you. Vere, I ask you, beg you to marry me, not because of anything else, but that I love you, because—because I can't bear my life without you?"

Still Vere was silent, and Dorian with a passionate despair in his voice bent down and took her cold passive hand. "Don't tell me Vere, have pity, forgive me. I have been a vain pigheaded ass, I thought you cared for me in London. I see now only too plainly what a fool I was, I don't deserve your love. But oh! my darling, say you care for me a little."

"I do," said Vere, in a queer indistinct little voice, "but I never thought you really cared for me."

"And I," said Dorian, gently, "I never knew how sweet, how good—how far above me in every way you were, until that night, when you sat beside my mother's bed. Oh! Vere, I am sure she will be glad, and you my darling have kept your promise after all."

"Yes! and now let us go in, Norrys," she said half shyly, "mother will be wondering where we are." But it was quite an hour later before Mrs. Lorimer saw them step in at the open drawing-room window.

To a Friend.

Ah! dear, if thy heart should grow callous at last,
And thy friendship no longer be mine;
Remember that once in the time that is past,
You were faithful thro' shadow and shine.

So I treasure that love which was tender and true,
And my thoughts ever wander to thee;
And memories sweet of those dear old dead days,
Softens life and its sorrows for me.

Jubilee Stamp-quest of Abner Keggs.

By HALBORO DENHAM.

IT was with no little interest one day, just a decade ago, that I read a letter from my old friend Abner Keggs, of Boston, U.S. He was about to visit England for the first time, but although he had made his pile and retired from business, I felt sure that something else besides Jubilee sight-seeing was inducing him to cross the Herring Pond. What that purpose was I could not guess, but I was too well acquainted with Abner Keggs not to know that, despite his being a Yankee out and out, big shows had very little attraction for him. With plenty of money at his command, he had never yet set foot in effete Europe, and the glorification of Western democracy at the expense of the Royalties of the Old World, was with him a hobby. When success at last gave him the opportunity for enjoying well earned leisure (if he ever really understood what the word meant) it also enabled him to cultivate one or two tastes, the indulgence of which he seemed to have put by for later life. One of these had I knew developed into a positive mania for sleeping and working in the uppermost regions. This he attributed to some remote cliff-dwelling ancestry, but I believe the truth of it was that he had been born and bred in a semi-subterranean cottage, and the memories of that early home created in him a passion for altitude. Indeed, had Tartarin, of Alpine fame, come across him, he would have instantly made a disciple or a rival as candidate for a broken neck. It was precisely this weakness of Abner's which now became the source of no little perplexity to me, for I was commissioned to find him quarters as high as the top of St. Paul's, if I could. Nothing very short of this would well do for the man whose home was in a pair of attics in a twenty storey building. Well, at the cost of some hours hunting about, I was at last successful in discovering suitable lodgings at Queen Anne's Mansions, and I felt so proud of my choice that I enjoyed my humble chop with extra relish and the pleasurable anticipation of Abner's surprise at finding himself ensconced so high above the din of London street traffic. At last I got a wire telling me of his arrival at Liverpool, and so in due

course I hied to Euston and met him. It was with something like elation that I cabbed Keggs to his loft and he acknowledged that I had acquitted myself well of the task of locating him airily. Thereupon I took him round to my club, where, over the after-dinner cigar and whisky and soda, he broached for the first time the real purport of his journey.

He had contracted since I last parted from him a passion for collecting rare stamps, and it was the chance of securing a very valuable one which had brought him across the Atlantic. It seemed that once upon a time the governor of the island of Criadera, who was governed by his wife, was persuaded by his better half to have her portrait engraved on a new issue of stamps for the colony. All the cyclones which had swept that island from time immemorial were as nought compared to the hurricane raised by feminine jealousy when Mrs. This or Miss That found that they could not post a letter or take the receipt for the cook's wages without being confronted by the representation of the governor's wife. When Downing Street stepped in the stamps went out of circulation, and the governor and his lady went out of the office just in time to avert a revolution. Keggs had heard of the existence and whereabouts of one of these stamps and meant to have it. So the following morning after an early breakfast I met him at Charing Cross and accompanied him by train to Blackheath; the manner in which he had got scent of his quarry was told me on the road.

"Since giving up business," said he, "I have taken a niece of mine in hand, and, last fall engaged a governess for the girl. The lady is a German, whose mother lives at Blackheath, the latter has charge of some of her daughter's books and such like, and among them is the stamp album containing the specimen I want. I have a letter in my pocket authorising me to take the album away."

"All plain sailing," I interrupted.

"Not so easy, my boy—there's a fool of a brother in the way. He is an Anarchist, and has been trying to get hold of the stamps for some darned plot of his, and from all I have heard he would put a bullet through either of us if he thought we were walking off with the Criadera, provided of course he could do so with safety to himself, for such fellows look pretty sharp after their own skins. I guess however Abner Keggs knows a trick or two worth this." My friend showed me a formidable looking Bulldog revolver, which would

have scared the most hardened burglar, let alone one of the wretches whose guiding principle is "to live without work and kill without fighting."

"But why, in the name of goodness, did not the old lady send out the album yonder?"

"The girl was so frightened of the Anarchist rascal that she hid it. The son began as a spendthrift before he took up with the bomb fraternity, and Miss Paull hid the book one day to prevent his selling it. She got a travelling engagement with some people I know in the States, and before leaving in haste she hid the album under the floor of the summer-house in the back garden. There was no time after she made up her mind to join my friends for her to pack her traps properly, so digging was out of the question. Yes, it was a queer way to hide her treasures, but then women are rum cattle. The worst of it is that the Anarchist cuss knows of the Criadera stamp and has ransacked the house for it, for he is aware of its value. He wants money for his infernal gang, and has written to Miss Paull, saying that the precious brotherhood must have the Criadera, which is worth a couple of thousand dollars if it's worth a cent."

"How do you know the fellow has not found the stamp since he wrote?" was my next query. Abner looked startled.

"He had not last night, anyway. When I left you yesterday I went straight with a police introduction from our men to your head bosses here and arranged to find out young Paull's late movements. Your chaps must be pretty cute and wide awake, I calculate, for I have already heard that he has not been to Blackheath for over a month. Here's his address." I looked at a card and read "Franz Paull, Amicables Club, Charlotte Street."

"I am going to introduce you and explain what I want. Then you must go to the garden and get the book up. It will only be a five minutes job. The album is in a box which is not locked. Tear out page 40, put it in your pocket, wrap the book up in this paper, and rejoin me."

On knocking at Mrs. Paull's house, which we found to be a small detached villa residence abutting on the Heath, the door was opened by the good lady herself, and we were shown into a bright little sitting-room, where Keggs, in his energetic way, quickly arranged matters. At his suggestion that I should step into the back garden

and have half a pipe whilst he finished his chat, I withdrew. In five minutes that album was unearthed with the help of a garden trowel lying handy, and then page 40 was neatly but hurriedly torn out and slipped into my breast pocket. Following my instructions, I next made my way into the hall and placed my parcel on a chair with my hat on the top. Mrs. Paull and Keggs came out, and, as we took our leave, I noticed that the former glanced uneasily at my burden as if it were some uncanny thing.

On emerging from Charing Cross terminus I led Keggs into Gatti's, where we sat down to lunch. How he gloated over that stamp! In my opinion he waxed simply childish, but at last capped all his folly by solemnly confiding the wretched thing to me as he wished me good-bye until later in the evening, and hurried off with the album under his arm. Now, incredible as it may appear, I did not realise the importance of my charge. My sole experience of stamp collecting had been briefly terminated at school, when I sold by auction some scores of varieties, now, I regret to learn, considered very valuable, and the shilling or two which the transaction brought me, promptly went in ginger-beer and tarts at our tuck shop. Keggs had left me without any precise warning about exhibiting the Criadera, and so I speedily found myself dipping it in a glass of water to detach it from the leaf I had torn out. To tell the honest truth I felt tired, which was, after all, not to be wondered at, considering the unusually early morning's work I had got through, including two meals in the place of one. I had sacrificed myself for the sake of Keggs, and felt lazily disinclined to stir from my comfortable lounge, although it was not yet two. In fact I was getting drowsy.

"Would you like a game of chess, sir?" was the query on the part of a young man in blue spectacles and a rather continental get-up. This effectually roused me from my lethargy. The mention of chess generally does, and at that epoch I was a pretty constant player at Gatti's. The challenge came natural to me and I accepted it. As I somewhat hastily removed the stamp from the water, brushed it lightly on a table napkin, and put it into my waistcoat pocket, my new found adversary said: "So you are a philatelist and have a rare prize. I did not know there was one like it knocking about." I was taken aback, for the man had evidently a keen eyesight despite his goggles. Well, I won the first move

and opened with the King's gambit, which I worked into a pet variation of mine. But I had met my match, for my antagonist mated me after a tremendous struggle which lasted a good three hours. He offered to give me a chance of my revenge, but I declined on the plea of an engagement, and as we parted, he gave me a card on which I read for the second time that day "Franz Paull, Amicables Club, Charlotte Street." I involuntarily shot a keen glance at my late opponent as I threaded my way between the rows of busy tables, and on the threshold of the restaurant stood for a moment irresolute as to how to act in this strange case of double discovery. Here, apparently by the veriest chance, I had come across Franz Paull on the same day that I had first learned of the existence of such an individual, and I somehow felt a misgiving that he had recognised the Criadera stamp as the one he had been trying to get hold of. Was his presence in the café and in my customary corner, altogether an accident? Nonsense, it could be only one of those coincidences proving that the world is not so big after all. We were both chess players, and enthusiasts in those days were pretty sure to come into touch with one another at Gatti's sooner or later; that was, I decided, about the top and bottom of the matter. Still, it was worth while telling Keggs of the curious meeting, and so I adjourned to Queen Anne's Mansions only to find him out. Leaving word for him to meet me at my club, I hurried off to my rooms to fetch my summer overcoat, for there were signs of a heavy storm brewing. That was no sooner accomplished than I found the garment too warm. To carry it over my arm would be a nuisance. Finally, I settled the difficulty by depositing it at the club, where I took the opportunity of having a light dinner. Whilst meditating over a cigar as to how to kill time till Keggs turned up, I conceived the insane desire (as he would have termed it) of running Paull to earth at the Amicables, with the excuse that I could not rest without another bout. The idea was barely entertained, than I was strolling leisurely along Wardour Street, and not many minutes later was in the locality of the Anarchist haunt, for such I judged it to be. It was no difficult matter to find the looked-for battle ground, but once at the entrance I paused a moment, for it seemed deucedly like venturing into the lions' den. However, what was the good of coming so far and then turning tail? I strode in and asked a man,

whom I took for a German waiter, whether Paull was visible? "Yes, the gentleman will find Herr Paull in the inside." I was about to push open a side door which looked like the entrance to the kind of club room which abounds in the quarter. He stopped me, however, and said he would first make sure if Paull was there. Secrecy evidently reigned. I could not pass muster as even an amateur detective, but perhaps the fellow scented the professional journalist. Once more as I waited I had leisure enough to reflect that I was probably doing a foolish thing, and a thought crossed my mind that poor old Keggs would disapprove of such rashness, but I did not sympathise with his folly in luring me out of bed at such an unearthly hour for a beggarly square inch of paper. At last when I was ushered into the rather dimly lit room my antagonist of the afternoon stood before me and at once expressed his delight at having discovered such a warlike opponent. Then turning to an exceedingly powerful looking negro, whose very tall and broad brimmed top hat made him look too big for the room he sat in, Paull remarked,

"Antoine, here is the foeman I was speaking of—one worthy of my steel."

"You mean skill," said the other. "But if you are fighting *à outrance* you may want steel enough."

"By Jove!" continued Paull, "I should never have expected you to look me up so keenly. But to be sure you must dearly love the game from what I have seen of your play at times. Well, here's a board. I suppose we toss again."

"No, it's your turn with white. I am rather at home in managing black," was my answer, glancing, whilst Paull lit another jet or two at the huge negro, on whose face I detected a scarcely perceptible smile. I have since thought that these last words of mine although quite innocent were taken by both my listeners as having a meaning never intended. As it happens, in chess matters the French Defence is a favourite game with me. I filled and lit my pipe, and the game began. In the end it went in my favour.

"Shall we have a conqueror?" said Paul. I was now, to confess the truth, wrapped up in chess. Keggs and his stamps and our appointment were clean forgotten. Besides, the evening was young, rain was falling heavily, and so we had another set to. I opened with

the King's gambit, and this time my variation came off successfully after a long and hard fought battle.

"That's right, mine host!" said Paull to a Frenchman, who had been bustling about, and who now placed a couple of glasses on our table and produced a bottle of what I speedily judged to be very fair Bordeaux. The next game went against me and the score was now equal, so we opened the deciding struggle. In this I did not prove a stayer. The room, in spite of the windows being open, was uncomfortably warm and seemed to grow more and more so as the night wore on. Whilst my antagonist took to studying the moves more carefully than in the previous games, I caught my mind wandering from the board to Keggs. As for the other Anarchists, they had with one or two exceptions vanished, but there in his corner was still sitting the gigantic negro with that cynical smile still playing about his thick lips. Somehow or other it seemed meant for me as if he felt sure I was in for a defeat. To make matters worse I began to feel drowsy again. This would never do, so tossing off another glass I endeavoured to concentrate my attention on the game. But I could not shake off the lethargy which had got hold of me, and even a cup of coffee which I was weak enough to have recourse to, did not rouse me into fighting trim. Try as I might, clear perception of my antagonist's strategy and all fertility of resource to meet it seemed to be leaving me. My play grew feebler and feebler, and my nodding more frequent, and at last, after apologising for my lengthy consideration of a rather simple move, I heard Paull say; "Mate in four, sir!" and I went off in a sound sleep. When I awoke it was with a start and cold shiver. The gas was yet burning near our table, and Paull was sitting opposite me just as he had been when he announced my discomfiture. The horrible full blooded negro had apparently not budged. I confusedly glanced at the clock. Good Heavens! it indicated 3 a.m. Staggering to my feet like one aroused from a drunken stupor, I was dimly conscious of the disagreeable thought that I had been drugged and maybe robbed, and I instinctively felt in my pockets. But the small sum I had on me when I entered the club seemed intact, and my old silver watch of little value except to its owner was still in its accustomed place. Somewhat ashamed of showing such signs of suspicion, I was, whilst reaching for my hat

and stick stammering some lame apology for my conduct when the negro quitted his chair and barred my exit.

"So you have been overmatched. You have skill at the play, but our Franz is more adroit. Ah, truly, he knows how to give you lessons. Yes, you have made a bold stroke to come here, but *Sacre Diable* why did he not bring his American, Franz?" I thought the fellow must have been drinking, and looked at Paull who was drumming with the chessmen on the marble table. Suddenly he seemed to tap a kind of signal, and half a dozen men entered silently and ranged themselves in a group on the chairs nearest the door, which they shut. What a villainous collection they presented! Foreigners all of them, and such types of low cunning in undersized humanity I have seldom seen. I was alone with the scoundrelly crew, gripping my stick with a wild idea of hurling myself among the lot and trying to fight my way out. I am sure I could have managed the smaller fry, but the black giant was another matter. I began to realise that diplomacy was the only thing. A woman in such a fix would have startled all Charlotte Street with one scream, and had the life squeezed out of her in a trice. The men were desperate, that was evident. They thought I was a spy, and they had come to some determination as to the nature, which I was not long left in doubt. Perhaps they were meditating some infernal outrage during the celebration of the Jubilee. Was I to be knocked on the head like some rat in a hole? If so, why did I still find myself in this room instead of awakening bound and gagged in the cellar? Were there no means of escape? What of the window? No, that was shuttered and barred inside, and there were two doors between me and the street, both probably secured, and a pack of ruffians guarding me, a prisoner. All these thoughts flashed across me in an instant. Suddenly Paull threw himself back in his chair, and said, as if he was the arbiter of my fate, "you have brought this on yourself. Don't let's mince matters. You know our opinions and have come here to learn what you could. I am very sorry to inconvenience you, for I like a good chess player (I believe the rascal was sincere) but I have the honour to be chief of this society, and I am about to make a proposal to you. Oblige me by following me to our committee room. Antoine will join us, and there you must decide for yourself."

"If you mean to make conditions before letting me out of this trap, say on at once."

"That is a matter for us three to settle alone—are you ready?"

Paull rose and moved to the rear of the room. I followed, putting on as bold a face as I could, and trying to show a confidence I was very far from feeling, and as the negro walked behind me I recollect that I could almost fancy his fingers at my throat. Paull touched a spring, a panel in the wall slid open, and, in another instant, we were in a small chamber lit by a single gas burner, and decorated with the most diabolical frescoes of men and beasts, as if some lunatic had run riot with a skilful brush and a morbid mind. I took a chair with as much calmness as I could muster, on the innermost side of the small table, which I trusted would be some kind of barricade and protection if need arose. The negro waved his hand towards the walls (there was no window, not even a skylight) and said "You see here my masterpieces—ah! I have studied at the Paris *ateliers*, but just now you cannot admire art. Presently perhaps you will have leisure." I could not help regarding the repulsive black as the high executioner of the gang, and had seen enough of the West Indies to understand that the crackbrained ruffian who had studied painting in Paris and had produced these fiendish looking wall pictures must have been initiated into the hideous Vadhoul cult of Hayti. Paull did not keep me long waiting. "You had a valuable stamp on you this afternoon. I have a better right to it than you. Where is it?"

Now through all this cursed business I had never given the stamp a thought. I felt in my pocket; the thing was not there. Both the men smiled at my perplexity. Of course they had long ago ascertained that it was not on me. I told them that I no more knew where the stamp was than the man in the moon. Then I got angry and defiant and warned them that as soon as I was missed I should be looked for in Charlotte Street. Never shall I forget the expression which came over the black's face. He muttered a few words in French patois to Franz, but I caught the word "*frangine*," which I knew meant sister, and some allusion to the American. Paull nodded, and turning to me said: "We have no time to waste. If you cannot find the stamp, give me a note to your American friend, asking him to send three hundred pounds in cash by the bearer. I shall consider that an equivalent, although the stamp alone is worth more."

"I shall do no such thing. My friend is not the fool you take him for."

Just then a peculiar tap came to the door. • Paull got up, and first telling me that he would leave me to consider the situation a little with his friend, he opened the panel and re-entered the club room. Picture my feelings, closeted as I was with my black jailor, who I felt certain was not only an Anarchist but a worshipper of the horrible Vadhous sect—one of those demons on earth who have made the fair island of Hayti a hotbed of murder and cannibalism. In plain English I was alone and face to face with a murderous man-eater in a silk hat. Perhaps a madman.

"You make a mistake in not doing as Paull wants. It is you who are in peril, not we. Think you I believe you when you say you will be sought here. *Mille fois non !*" The wretch took out a revolver, crossed one leg over the other, and bade me make up my mind to send for the money quickly, "or," he went on, "you may as well say your prayers. Your religion is a good one here, but we have one much better in my land. Still your Christian faith is not bad. Do you understand why I, Antoine Benoit, know it is good? No, you cannot comprehend. Listen and you shall see. Your priests tell you that when the dogs ate the wicked queen they did not touch the palms of her hands. Your writings must be true, for the palms of your hands taste bitter. We never eat them. But get the money—get it quick or pray very much, for time is short." I felt sure that Keggs would sooner or later recollect the card he had shown me and conclude that Paull and the Amicables were mixed up with my disappearance. The question was, how soon? If I gave the required paper it might facilitate my getting my liberty, and would not the gang be speedily captured with the plunder, even if it were given? On the other hand I reflected that they would probably leave me in this hole whilst they dispersed. But my situation with the cannibal and a six-shooter in his hand was intolerable. The minutes went slowly and my suspense was great as I watched my custodian, half expecting a bullet any instant. At last I heard a crash as if the front door was being broken in; Antoine sprang to his feet listening intently, then swung round towards me. The next second we were in darkness for he had turned out the gas. I dreaded a shot and shifted my position uneasily, feeling for the twentieth time that night a cold perspiration trickling down my back, as I waited silently,

holding my breath even, to hide my whereabouts. But no shot came; instead of that, I heard the most welcome sound I ever remember hearing, the cheery voice of dear old Keggs. Now I understood that the door must be at least unfastened and that Antoine must have fled during the last minute or so. And sure enough it yielded when I pushed, and I ran into the arms of a constable. He gripped me hard, but Keggs soon set things right, and we set about investigating the mystery as to the whereabouts of my kidnappers. They had evidently cleared off by a back door, locking it behind them, for there was not a soul on the premises beyond ourselves, and a second police officer, who was on guard at the front entrance, had seen nobody. After paying a visit to the police station in Tottenham Court Road, and relating all that had happened, it occurred to me to ask Keggs what had induced him to look for me at the Amicables. He explained that curiously enough the Scotland Yard people had sent to him, and a detective had accompanied him to Gatti's, which was known to be one of Paull's haunts. There they were not long in discovering that the Anarchist had met me at chess, and, as he had been the last person seen with me, my subsequent failure to keep my appointment at the club, coupled with the anxiety of Keggs about his stamp, at last suggested a visit to Charlotte Street, but not until he had searched far into the night for me elsewhere. When Keggs asked if the Criadera was all right I felt very much floored, but hoping for the best, said I would look for it at my diggings, and give it to him when we met a few hours later. Then I hailed a hansom, and having dispatched my rescuer to his quarters, I hurried off to my own in Gower Street. Arrived in front of my door I mechanically felt for my key, but to my surprise it was not forthcoming. However, I recollected that it was probably in the pocket of the overcoat which I had left at my club, and although it seemed scarcely worth while knocking the people up, yet I decided to do so. After apologising for what was, on my part, a record proceeding, I went to roost. My adventures must have played havoc with my nerves, for my slumber seemed disturbed by hideous dreams, and I was just in the throes of a nightmare in which the Vadhou man was about to kill me in the Obeah fashion preparatory to giving an Anarchist supper, when I was mercifully roused by my Yankee friend. His first question was for the Criadera stamp, and I promptly tried to satisfy him by diving into my dressing

gown and ransacking everything, but to no purpose. He next catechised me carefully about my movements prior to my going to the Amicables. I answered meekly and submissively like a penitent schoolboy, and never did a juvenile culprit grasp at a straw with greater eagerness than I did when I remembered the overcoat. Keggs charitably allowed it for the moment to cover a multitude of sins. He even conceded me five minutes for my morning tub, and actually joined me at a hasty breakfast. (Somehow Keggs always made my existence a rush when he was about.)

I now learned that he had received by post a letter from Mrs. Paull, saying that her son had entered by the back-garden just in time to see us when we had been leaving the house at Blackheath. He had caught up the letter which Keggs had brought about the album and which the good lady had left on the table, and then he had furiously sallied out after us. He would very likely keep us in view, and the letter was to put Keggs on his guard. At this stage the landlady appeared on the scene, a prey to intense excitement. I speedily gathered that the lock of the front door had been tampered with, and in her opinion it must have occurred some time since ten the previous night.

I left the breakfast-table and made a hasty survey of my effects, but could not detect anything wrong. The situation was humiliating, with Keggs looking as if he were more sorry for me than himself; and the landlady waiting, as if she half expected me to secure the burglar at a minute's notice. She further exasperated me by insinuating that I had perhaps damaged the lock by trying the wrong key, and she even appealed to me to turn my pockets inside out. I had almost given her notice when Keggs came to the rescue by suggesting that we should go round to my club and investigate the overcoat. But he altered his mind on the arrival of a locksmith, and we waited until the man had done his job.

"Well, mum; there's been burglars or some such gentry at work, but what they wanted to leave this behind beats me." So saying, the locksmith held out a crumpled piece of paper. Keggs took it, and tenderly unfolded his confounded Criadera stamp.

I promptly gave the man a half dollar, but Keggs shook him heartily by the hand, and gave him a fiver. Then we went on our way rejoicing to my club, where, of course, I found my overcoat and the latchkey safe in a side pocket. As for the stamp, there could be

little doubt that after putting it, damp as it was, in my waistcoat pocket, it had adhered to my key. I had used the latter only once since, when I went to fetch the overcoat, and the stamp, still adhering unnoticed, as I mechanically opened the door, had become detached in the interior of the lock. Paull had evidently followed us to town, and after watching Keggs hand me the stamp at Gatti's, had challenged me to a game of chess in hopes of getting some opportunity of securing the specimen. My subsequent movements had been carefully watched until my unexpected visit to the Anarchist Club had offered a chance of drugging me and annexing the prize. Not finding it on me, an attempt had been made to enter my lodgings. This was perhaps the best explanation for their delay in bringing things to a crisis when they tried to bully me into writing to Keggs for a ransom.

Here was a pretty elaborate range of operations condensed into such a short space of time, and I was at last fully convinced of the value of the Criadera stamp. I piloted Keggs to the Chancery Lane Safe Deposit, where it found an asylum whilst we did the Jubilee sights together. Then my friend went back a happy and contented man to Boston. As for the Charlotte Street gang, they one and all escaped to carry their cursed propaganda to other lands.

Damocles, or the Gates of Janus.

By THEODORA CORRIE.

Author of "IN SCORN OF CONSEQUENCE," "PETRONELLA DARCY,"
"ONLY THE AYAH," etc., etc.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE Duchess of Harebrook was a great lady, too great a lady to please the wives of some of the county magnates with whom she had to do. The first years of her married life had been chiefly spent in Paris, where her husband had held an appointment in the diplomatic service, and though on the death of his father he returned to the Grange, he found English society rather tame after the brilliant life he had led abroad. He brought over with him many of his French servants, his wonderful collection of old French glass, and a decided taste for foreign manners and customs. Under his wife's skilful fingers the rooms at the Grange acquired a certain elegance that had nothing English about it. She was apt to fill the house with foreigners too, this habit constituting a crowning offence in the eyes of her neighbours; but it would have taken a bold person to find fault with the Duchess.

Her charities were munificent; the bishop of the diocese came to her for help, when in need of money for church purposes, sure beforehand of her assistance; her name headed the list of patronesses of all important functions, and, wherever she went, there followed an atmosphere of state and ceremony, which in some people might have been considered affectation, but which seemed as much a part of herself as the air she breathed, or the rings on her long, slender hands.

Grande dame she was to her finger tips, though a certain vein of cold and ironical bitterness often tinged her conversation and marred her popularity. Those few persons who were near and dear to her knew this bitterness to be a mask donned by a proud and reserved nature, a shield, behind which lay many stronger feelings.

This evening, as she received her guests, her step-son at her side seemed to be a person of secondary importance. His manner was graceful enough, but on these occasions he was generally secretly conscious of some boredom, boredom successfully veiled by politeness.

At sixty, the fire of his step-mother's dark eyes was still unquenched, the tall figure, unbent, though sorely wasted. The white hair, thick and glossy still, turned off a low, broad brow, and rolled in an artistic profusion of soft twists, framed a face delicately and finely cut as a mask of thin ivory. Ill or well, sad or gay, the Duchess was generally immovably composed, though a fine observer might have noted that her very composure had something frozen in it, the composure of one to whom indifference had become second nature. Only once this evening, at the moment of Henrietta's entrance, the shadow of a smile had passed over her face. She had seldom taken much notice of her great-nieces, had never carried them off to her own rooms when they had spent the afternoon at the Grange with Ted, though once a year she gave a children's party, on Christmas Eve, to which, in former days, May and Henrietta had gone, dressed in their best frocks, and burdened with many injunctions from Sophie as to their behaviour. For Henrietta, the house would hold a certain glamour, and to-night the glamour rested on it still.

Brilliantly lighted up, the whole place looked beautiful. The entrance halls paved with semi-transparent onyx-marble, and bordered on either side with palms and rare shrubs; the reception rooms with their ceilings painted in Italian landscapes; the walls hung with delicate Indian silk; the old chandeliers of French glass, flashing a thousand colours from their wax lights; all this made up a fairyland through which Henrietta moved for the first time as a grown-up guest, feeling a little amused at herself, as if she were acting a part in some old castle of romance on whose threshold stood her great-aunt, transformed into a beneficent princess, whose thin, jewelled fingers would, this evening, push open for one new comer, the gate of society.

After receiving a greeting, Henrietta passed on, more happy in mind than some of her neighbours. The Duchess had a way of receiving all communications with as much quiet attention, as if they were state despatches of importance; and this manner sometimes made the smaller county magnates feel routed, people whose sheet-anchor of conversation chiefly attached itself to the state of the roads, the weather, or the crops. Henrietta, indeed, might be considered highly favoured, for her great-aunt had kissed her, a demonstration worth half a dozen caresses from anyone else.

Mrs. Goodwin, preceding the two girls, and leaning on Godwin's

arm, moved languidly, with the air of a person conferring a favour by the mere fact of her presence. Her dress of black velvet, trimmed with old point, suited her admirably, and contrasted effectively with the white gowns of her daughters.

Fresh, smiling, erect, May looked brilliantly pretty to-night. The sprays of orchids on her bodice were fastened by a diamond and emerald clasp, borrowed from her mother; and in her fair fluffy hair sparkled a tiny star of the same stones. As the two sisters moved along side by side, there was no more resemblance between them than that which can be traced between a humming bird and a swan.

On reaching one of the inner rooms, Mrs. Godwin came comfortably to a halt, seating herself on an ottoman and entering into conversation with Ted and Lady Evelyn, who had just arrived, bringing Captain Strafford with them. Needless to say, the latter addressed his conversation to May, while John Godwin, after a scarcely perceptible hesitation, sat down by Lady Evelyn, remarking that he had received orders to take her into dinner.

There were about a dozen people staying in the house, amongst others, Mrs. Godwin's cousin, the Comte de Brie. M. Réport, a literary Frenchman, the well-known proprietor of a Parisian paper. A German baron, and the baron's younger brother. The bishop of the diocese, and the bishop's wife, the bishop's chaplain, and the bishop's pretty daughter. Also, because the neighbouring county town boasted not only a cathedral but a military dépôt, there was a detachment of "colonels and captains," and last but not least, conspicuous in the midst of the military group, might have been seen a certain Lady Marianne Windsor St. John, a dark eyed, dark browed, handsome girl, who often stayed at the Grange, assigned to the Duke, by rumour, as a suitable match, chosen by his step-mother.

These persons made up the house party, and with the arrival of various other guests, everyone went into dinner. May moving off talking fluent German, on the arm of one of the Duke's musical friends, while Captain Strafford followed closely behind, ungratefully anathematising the social fate which had temporarily linked him to bishop's pretty daughter. Henrietta was taken in by the literary the Frenchman, M. Réport, a little man, with a pair of grey eyes almost as protuberant as those of a lobster, a self-assertive manner and a

style of conversation consisting chiefly of a string of questions, a man inclined to extract "copy" from everybody.

His remarks delivered at short intervals came one after the other, like the dropping of small shot, or the placing of interrogation points. Before dinner had far advanced, he became inwardly astonished, and a trifle piqued to find M. de Brie's conversation preferred to his own.

The Count, seated on Henrietta's other side, was one of those people who would always be popular everywhere. A man half French, half Italian by birth, a cosmopolitan by nature, seemingly touched only on the surface by the snows of time, and within perennially young.

Of late years he had rented Mrs. Godwin's Palazzo near Palermo, but as a young man he had lived chiefly in Paris. While there he had filled the post of private secretary to the late duke. Whenever the duchess wintered abroad, he was always a favoured guest, though he had never, till this spring, found his way to the Grange. Mrs. Godwin felt annoyed that he should have accepted this invitation after declining to come to Godwin's Rest only four months previously. She said to herself this evening, that if family ties had not availed to bring him to see her, a matter of family business would probably prove a more effectual spur to his energies.

The value of property having risen considerably in the neighbourhood of Palermo, Mrs. Godwin, thanks to a break in the lease of her house which would occur this autumn, had already suggested doubling the yearly rent so far paid by the Count.

Now M. de Brie, as an enthusiastic flower grower, had brought his garden to a rare state of perfection. He was also contemplating various little improvements this year, which would not only become impossible if the proposed arrangement were carried out, but worse still, the increased rent might force him to leave his home altogether. He was not particularly well off; the villa, in its way represented a small gem, and a Naboth's vineyard into the bargain. More than one rich man in the neighbourhood had cast envious eyes upon it, and of this fact Mrs. Godwin was perfectly well aware.

But of these wheels at work below the surface, Henrietta remained happily unconscious. Long before the end of dinner she came to the conclusion that the Count was a charming old man (by the way he was barely fifty-nine, but at eighteen, fifty-nine may easily seem very old indeed).

His reminiscences of the French court, and of the Empress Eugénie, his witty stories, and droll sallies: his description of the Duchess in the days of her beautiful youth: above all, his courtly manner, tinged with a suspicion of deferential admiration, delighted Henrietta. She almost forgot to eat any dinner. There was something so fresh in her interest, so attractive in her smiles, that the attention of more than one person wandered frequently to her end of the table.

May's keen eyes noted that Ted twice over sent away the plate before him untouched, while M. Réport, after satisfying his appetite, never a small matter, presently entered the lists competing with the Count for the attention of his fair neighbour. He gained his end by an unexpected announcement, which sounded in Henrietta's ears like a note of alarm.

"Mr. Godwin writes for the journal of which I have the happiness to be the proprietor," he said, "I have been trying to persuade him to settle in Paris, but his views on this subject do not altogether coincide with my own. I wish that Mademoiselle would use her influence."

Upon Henrietta the effect of this speech seemed electrical. She turned her head, saying with a half caught breath: "I could never ask him to do that, never. You do not know how he loves this place. It would be cruel to try to persuade him to leave England."

"And yet it would be a good opening for Mr. Godwin's great talent. He writes magnificently: there is something of Carrel in his style: he identifies himself with his paper."

"I hope that he will not, I am sure that he would not wish it," Henrietta repeated.

"And yet," said Monsieur Report, with a faint suspicion of malice, "Mr. Godwin did not decline my offer. He said since the matter could be left open, that he would think about it, and that later on he might be glad to settle in Paris."

"He had better settle in London," said the Count carelessly. "I wonder, Réport, how you can attempt to commit robbery, to take a sister from a brother, or to separate a second Eugénie from a second Maurice."

"He is my cousin, not my brother," said Henrietta, blushing at the compliment, "but it is the same thing. We were brought up

together, and nearly all his friends are English. I hope, Monsieur, that you will not try to persuade him to go abroad."

As she spoke, leaning towards the little Frenchman, with the half startled half pleading look on her face, the thought suddenly struck the Count that perhaps the bias of Paul's future settlement, the casting vote for life, might be lying already in the unconscious hands of this girl, who had declared the young man to be just like her brother.

The declaration carried truth on the face of it, but perhaps it might not be destined to remain true. The daily life of these two had so far run along side by side, yet the Count suspected that before long the two paths were destined to diverge. Loveliness like Henrietta's, belonging as much to the beautiful as to beauty, to the soul as well as the body, ever carries with it a sense of the pathetic, because the attraction must come to so many and the supreme gift to one only.

No such thought as this had occurred to Réport, excepting that Henrietta's opposition only made him the more determined to get his own way. Some other channel might be found. Possibly the young man's father would not be willing to slight so excellent an opening. Réport flattered himself that he knew good material when he met with it. It is possible that he might have continued to urge the advantages of Parisian life, had not the Count at this moment uttered a very natural exclamation of pitying amusement, glancing the while down the table to where Captain Stafford had just received a glass of claret on his coat sleeve, thanks to the carelessness of a servant. Henrietta could not help smiling too.

"Poor Captain Stafford," she said, "his evil star is certainly in the ascendant to-night. He was lamenting to me before dinner that Lady Evelyn had not allowed him to bring his banjo. By his own account he is very musical."

"A banjo," said Réport, "miséricorde! A banjo would be as much out of place here, as a glass of beer at a temperance meeting. Music is a very serious matter in this house."

"But don't you think that half the people who are invited to the temperance meetings would be very glad of the beer if they could get it?" said Henrietta.

The spirit of contradiction had entered her so far as M. Réport was concerned. She looked at him now with a delicate suspicion

of mischief in her eyes: mischief accentuated by the irresistible drollery of her question. The Count stroked his moustache to hide some involuntary play of feature.

"Mademoiselle is right," he said gravely, "I am fond of beer myself."

"All the same," said the other, "I should pity anyone who ventured to produce it on the platform. It would take a bold man to follow up Wagner and Chopin, or the baron's improvisations with a nigger melody. Has Mademoiselle ever heard the baron improvise? No? It is a thing not easily forgotten. He spent two hours at the piano in the back drawing-room this afternoon, with the Duke on the sofa as audience. I believe his grace was fast asleep, though he managed to wake up at intervals to murmur 'sonderbar.' Afterwards we had a course of Chopin."

There was a suspicion of irony in M. Réport's voice. It may easily be supposed that the German contingent introduced by the Duke, formed at times a contrasting balance, a kind of sauce piquante opposing itself to the French element maintained by the duchess. True, M. de Brie would scarcely have lost his urbanity had he found himself in the midst of the biblical confusion on the plains of Shinar, but Réport was a man of a different type altogether.

"I am very fond of Chopin," said Henrietta, "the little ripple in his music is so delightful. It reminds one of falling water."

"Mademoiselle is fond of Chopin," M. Réport repeated, with the air of a person announcing a discovery, "doubtless she is also an able interpreter of his music?"

Henrietta's dislike to this little dark man was fast deepening into positive aversion. His flippant remarks represented a style of manner she had never before met with.

"I don't play Chopin well," she said quietly, "but I have heard him played very often, and one never seems to come to an end of his suggestiveness."

"Well," he said, "I am afraid I don't appreciate him. He is too ethereal altogether for my taste. I like some passion, some self-abandonment, in music, indeed in everything. I do not care for any amusement if I cannot get some excitement out of it."

"Perhaps," said the Count smiling, "perhaps Mademoiselle scarcely looks upon music in the light of an amusement; and pro-

bably she considers self-abandonment in its highest sense must of necessity be spiritual."

Henrietta looked at him comprehensively ; for one of those brief moments which come so rarely, the two souls met as if by a mutual flash.

" Ah, yes," she said, unconscious of the troubled inflection in her voice, " for myself I would far rather be calmed than excited. A piano, and a bunch of violets. Wasn't that Chopin's idea of happiness? It used to be mine too."

" And now? " said M. Réport. But his question remained unanswered. At this moment dinner came to an end, and Henrietta rose to her feet.

The little Frenchman looked after her retreating figure with a complicated shrug of the shoulders: with a touch of unwilling admiration in his eyes—the admiration of one forced to acknowledge unexpected qualities in another. But all he said was: " Nature made a mistake somewhere: Miss Godwin ought to have been a Frenchwoman."

CHAPTER IX.

By the time the gentlemen had followed their hostess, people began to arrive in a continuous stream. When the rooms were half filled, the Duke played a fantasia on the violin in a very masterly manner, after which performance the baron improvised for the space of some fifteen minutes. The music he affected was generally of a weird and perplexing character, and everyone applauded in a subdued manner when he left off playing. It might have been noticed on these evenings that society went to the Grange very willing to praise, but singularly loth to play or sing. The little pause succeeding this second performance was presently followed by what Captain Strafford called the selection of the first victim, and in this instance the victim proved to be May.

The girl did not hurry herself in her progress towards the piano, though not at all inclined to defer her arrival there altogether, or to agree with Captain Strafford's murmured remarks, " I call it worse than a public execution," he said. " Fancy expecting other people to play after all this professional work. Lady Evelyn was quite

right about my banjo ; had I brought it, native modesty would have hanged me in the strings. If I were you, Miss Godwin, I should refuse to perform, only I am afraid that it is too late, the Duke has his eye upon you."

"I am very glad that he has," said May, smiling. "I don't agree with you at all. I had just begun to feel like the one canary in a 'happy family,' whose accomplishments seemed likely to be passed over. I think we all ought to contribute our share to the evening's entertainment, and the sooner I begin the sooner my part will be over."

Her cousin who was standing by the piano caught this last remark. He looked particularly languid, and his eyes drooped more than ever. As May seated herself on the music stool, he leaned forward, saying in a resigned voice: "You need not be afraid of my criticism. I promise you that I will make none."

"I was not thinking of myself," said May. "I was pitying you. You don't like any playing but your own, do you, cousin Sol?"

Tone and look were alike so innocently enquiring that they might have disarmed all suspicion. "If you will turn over for me," she went on, "it would be a comfort, or perhaps the Baron will be so kind ; it is always an assistance." She did not seem afraid to challenge criticism. Taking off her gloves in a leisurely manner, and handing them into Captain Strafford's custody, she played a difficult sonata all through, with a brilliancy of touch and a certainty of execution which did her master infinite credit.

By the time she had finished, the bishop's wife came to the conclusion that Miss Godwin would probably be a useful girl at concerts ; and the Duke's expression had changed from polite resignation to approval. May received his compliments without any confusion ; indeed, there was a touch of indifference in her manner which rather piqued him. He was not accustomed to have his attentions undervalued, and sometimes derived a languid amusement from the mild flutter which his presence occasioned among the young ladies of his acquaintance.

"You like my playing," said May ; "now I don't. I don't care about it in the least. I have had an excellent master, and I suppose I am a good mimic ; but he often told me that I could not put myself into good music, and he was quite right. I do not honestly care for it. I like playing Waldteufel's waltzes better than all the

sonatas that ever were written, only then I always long to be dancing at the same time. This would be a perfect house for a ball. Do you never give one here?" she ended, in her pretty composed voice.

She had a bird-like rapidity of flitting from one subject to another, which sometimes bewildered those listening to her.

"We have not had a ball here for a good many years in the summer time," said her cousin, looking down at her, much as a greyhound might look at a self-possessed kitten, while the people at a little distance came to the conclusion that Miss Godwin was trying to get up a flirtation, and that foreign schools were apt to make a girl sadly forward.

"If I had a house like yours," May went on, "I should be always dancing, summer and winter too. I wish you would give a ball soon, cousin Sol. Godwin's Worthy is a much duller place than Brussels."

"I will think about it; perhaps we may have a dance before long," said he, surprised at his own declaration. For when had his step-mother ever given a dance in the country at this time of the year?

"If he talks it over with Aunt Catherine it will probably come to nothing," May reflected. "It is his own house; he could give a ball every week if he chose to." Aloud she said, "Thoughts spoil with keeping. I can't imagine how most people get on here with only afternoon parties. However, Cousin Evelyn's birthday will be next month, and Captain Strafford says that he is going to help her celebrate it properly. I should hope that may mean private theatricals at the least. Captain Strafford plays the banjo, cousin; he is quite a shining light in the musical world. The banjo is a delightful instrument, particularly when well played and *voué au noir*; I mean to the exposition of nigger melodies."

"You do not mean to tell me, May, that you would prefer a banjo to your own playing?"

"Why not?" said May, mischievously. "If you ask for my opinion, I think I do. I believe half the world would be of my faction too, if they told the truth. No, cousin, it's no use shaking your head at me, for I like popular airs, and I adore dance music." She rose then, putting on her gloves, and holding out one hand to have a refractory button fastened. Though perfectly at her ease with

him, there was not a trace of coquetry in her manner; he might have been her grandfather.

So far he had always thought of her as a pretty, spoiled child, but this evening he found her drollery distinctly amusing. Some people have the knack of carrying on conversation for both sides at once. This habit certainly saves trouble if the second person is by nature indolent.

The Duchess, seated at some little distance, watched the small tableau with appreciative eyes, remarking, *sotto voce*, to Godwin who stood at her side: "That niece of ours is of the comet order, John. She will always draw a tail after her, and will be a society belle before many months are over."

"She reminds me more of a Dresden china shepherdess, than of anything else," said John, smiling. "She is very pretty, but——" he paused, and his eye travelling from May to Henrietta held an unspoken thought.

"Nature intends Henrietta for a great lady if she lives," said the Duchess. "No, I don't mean that she has bad health, but she has a mind and a heart, and, to judge by her face, labours under the misfortune of having cultivated both."

"Why misfortune, Aunt Catherine?"

"People get on so much better without, now-a-days," said the old lady. "A heart, more often than not, means a right of way for other people's pain, if not for one's own, till the bridge breaks down. Since, as Leopardi tells us, the nobler the nature, the greater must be the capacity for suffering. Pain may harden some people, but it kills others."

"And others, surely, it tempers to perfection."

"There isn't one nature in a hundred, John, that remains unwarped by the pressure of life. In this nineteenth century of ours, too much heart and too much feeling are apt to be a misfortune to some people; others,"—here she glanced imperceptibly in the direction of the piano where May still stood, the centre of a little knot of people—"others will get through life far more comfortably. There is always a scramble going on for the best place on a coach, and inside seats are worth securing when rough weather comes, even at the expense of some elbowing."

John who knew his aunt well, looked at her, smiling.

"Hetty will never need to use her elbows, of that I am quite con-

vinced ; she will find plenty of people ready to do it for her," he said, turning now, and glancing at Henrietta, who was seated at the other side of the room, watching May with an air of pretty interest.

"Miss Godwin tells me that she is very musical," suggested an unexpected voice, and the duchess looked up to find that M. Réport and the Count had come together to the side of her sofa.

"My niece, being a Godwin, has every right to be fond of music," she said. "And as for the Salviani family, M. de Brie can speak for them. Do you remember, Antoine," she went on, "the year that we made holiday, and you took us to Sicily to visit your aunt? What a true improvisatrice she was, and how she used to play to us by moonlight, with the piano taken into the verandah. Those beautiful old hands of hers had a fascination for me ; they could weave spells that might have drawn all creation after them. That was music worth listening to. I am told that my niece has inherited her great-grandmother's fingers, but the gift is hardly to be hoped for once in a century."

"If I might hazard a guess," said the Count, "I should say that Miss Godwin played by preference when nobody listened to her."

"Nevertheless," said the Duchess, "I should be glad if you would ask her to play to me."

The Count started on his errand with secret reluctance. Whatever the future might hold for this girl, at the present moment she reminded him more of an unpublished poem than of anything else, a poem too sweet to be handed over to the criticism of outsiders. He delivered his message, however, with the best grace possible, and felt a little surprised when Henrietta looked at him with a smile and a shake of the head.

"Mamma does not wish me to improvise at any parties for the present," she said, "because when I once begin to play, I always let my feelings run away with me, at least I never can remember that there is anyone listening. But I will sing something if my aunt would like me to."

She rose as she spoke, and the Count followed her with a humorous expression on his face.

As long as the world lasts many a Pegasus will be impounded by the placidly conventional, in the same way that the appearance of a rare bird is generally heralded by a shot gun.

Slipping her gloves under one of the brackets that supported the

candles, Henrietta kept nobody waiting; M. de Brie had offered to find her music, but drew back smiling, when she said that she had brought none, and that all her songs were in her head. There was no trace of shyness in her manner: her freedom from consciousness, that instrument of self-torture to so many girls, arising, not from indifference, but from lack of realisation that anyone would be likely to think much about her.

Henrietta could say truly that she was fond of singing, but Paul might easily have added that her playing was a part of her life, though most girls would have been well contented if they could have possessed her voice. It was a contralto of no wonderful compass, but excellently trained, and very true and sweet. This evening she sang with more expression than usual, choosing, at the request of the Count, an old French song, a simple, well-known air, with a refrain at the end of each verse.

The suggestion that Paul might find it necessary to settle in Paris had crossed her evening's happiness like the sudden pressure of a cold finger, linking itself to that other shadow always lurking in the background. It made her uneasiness take a more defined shape, and gave a touch of deeper feeling to a voice, which possessed at all times, an exquisite sympathetic tenderness.

Sitting there at the piano in the full light of the candles, with her head slightly raised, poised flower-like on its long throat; with the white lilies drooping from her white dress, and the little touch of wistfulness in her eyes, she made the fairest picture that the old rooms had framed for more than half a century: fairer than any of the painted faces looking down from the walls: fair to the Duchess as the shadow of her own lost youth.

Most people were gazing now in Henrietta's direction, but the Count's glance, quiet yet searching, concentrated itself first on Paul then upon Ted Lisle. The two men were within a few feet of each other. Paul stood with his eyes cast down and with a face so absolutely unmarked by any expression, that it might almost have been termed vacant, but the hand hanging at his side in its nervous tension, told a story to the Count's finely trained perceptions.

Ted's glance was fixed upon Henrietta's fingers as they moved over the keys, and his hazel eyes showed for a moment a wonderful tenderness, which belied the unstudied carelessness of his attitude. For the Count there was a great fascination in Ted's absolute

serenity, a serenity which seemed detached from its surroundings. Strangely enough, one of Henrietta's remarks, made during dinner, came back to his memory, with the force of an unconscious confession : "for myself I would far rather be calmed than excited."

The Count had gone through plenty of sharp suffering both mental and bodily during his sojourn on this earth of ours : had known so much of life in its sadder aspects, and seen so many dramas played out, that nowadays to half the actors he came across, it almost seemed to him that he could supply the cues beforehand, and trace each play to a probable conclusion.

But sometimes the cues are not ordinary ones. True, the old air of love is always the same, but its variations on the human heart are infinite, and to-night, despite the lights, and the flowers, and the music, it struck this man that here again for one life out of these three lay the probable opening of a tragedy.

Stifling a sigh, he turned away. Henrietta's song proved to be the success of the evening. The Baron, who was a sentimental man, wiped his eyes, and the Duke moving down the room to where his sister was seated, remarked, with unusual admiration in his voice, "Evelyn, where did that child learn to sing?"

"Oh, said Lady Evelyn, "singing comes to Hetty as naturally as it does to the birds, but she has had the advantage of good lessons too. Miss Lavender was one of Garcia's favourites : he wanted to bring her out. She went through all the requisite training, but if you remember her father was always against it, and she told me once that she could not bear the thought of all the eyes looking at her. Dear old sweet Lavender never made anything of me, but Henrietta's music might enchant anyone. I believe the child is always singing."

"Who would take those two girls for sisters?" said Sol, meditatively. "May reminds me of an American, without the twang. Fancy her telling me to give a ball! If I do have one on your birthday, will you come to it?"

"No, not on that day, Sol. I thought that we had nearly decided to have the concert then, and you always help me with that. I am not sure if the school house will hold all the people this year, and the navvies too. Now don't look so aggrieved, I fancied that you would do anything to please me. You had much better decide to have your ball on the eighth of next month to celebrate mamma's

birthday. Lady Marianne is a tremendous dancer, and it would be a polite attention, for she is leaving you on the ninth."

The Duke gave a savage twist to his moustache.

"If you think that I am going to give a ball for Lady Marianne you're very much mistaken: I will see her at No-man's land first."

"Poor Marianne! You have neglected her shamefully all the evening."

"I am sure I have been as polite as usual," said Sol, in an ag-grieved voice.

"She is a particular friend of mine, and a very nice girl. You don't half appreciate her."

"I think I have heard you make that remark before, Evelyn."

"And I thought that you agreed with me. When you had that dreadful cold, and were shut up for six weeks, two years ago, don't you remember how good she was to you?"

"Oh, she is always good to me, very good," Sol admitted, in grudging accents, "and I must own that she knows how to read aloud, but somehow she bores one. Besides, the St. Johns are all very well, but the Brown Windsor St. Johns came from the West Indies, and they imported too much of the family soap with them: I can't abide dark women."

"And I don't like spoilt bears," she said, shaking her head at him. "Let us see if we can find mamma. It is getting disgracefully late for her to be up. She is looking so tired to-night."

Lady Marianne Windsor St. John confided to her mother in a letter that evening, written in the privacy of her own bedroom, that she disliked conceited men, and really the Duke was getting so silent that he was unbearable. He had almost forgotten to wish her good-night.

Lady Marianne's accusation was not altogether without foundation. The life led by the Duke tended towards some self-indulgence. He would have said that he was very kind to his tenantry, for he had confided the care of his property to a thoroughly competent agent; but if left to itself, his benevolence would have ended there, so far as the farmers and tenants were concerned.

With regard to the poverty or the well-being of other people, his interest flowed naturally in only two channels. His help in the musical world was always lavishly given, and many poor and struggling musicians could have testified to his unfailing generosity:

also he subscribed largely to the Ship-wrecked Mariners' Society, or to anything of a nautical description, from the building of a lifeboat to the erection of a lighthouse. He was very wealthy, and his personal tastes were simple enough, though his yacht was perfectly appointed, and for two months in the season he generally had a box at the opera.

With only one lung left, and a portion of that in a far from satisfactory condition, he managed to exist very fairly—comfortably by his own account. His habit of perpetually following the sun had earned for him the nick name of Sol, while his yacht styled the Clytie, was very well known in Mediterranean waters. Ill health made him whimsical, and indolent: disinclined to exert himself from a social point of view, and quite content to see his step-mother reigning at the Grange, and his cousin dispensing hospitality in the family house in town.

But there was one person whose good opinion seemed dearer to the Duke than his yacht, his music, or his indolence, and that person was his sister Evelyn. Where she led he followed. Had she expressed a wish for a pair of tigers, he would have endeavoured to procure the creatures at the shortest possible notice, and personally superintended the clipping of their claws.

The collection of fossils referred to by Henrietta had been set on foot at Evelyn's instigation. Sol knew little of geology, and cared less: nevertheless the work was a good thing for the navvies from a pecuniary point of view, and it had already established a friendly feeling between a very rough lot of men and Lady Evelyn. Every Saturday she went to the works, inspected and paid for the finds of the week, and had them taken up to the Grange.

Her Grandfather had been a great entomologist, and had left behind him a beautiful collection of fossils, butterflies, and curiosities of all sorts. Evelyn had inherited his tastes, and always insisted that Sol ought to keep up the credit of the family. The fortunate bearer of ammonites or what not, generally inspected the museum, and the harmless traffic had been accepted as a pleasant, and a profitable one by the work people on the line.

Perhaps the only proceeding at which Sol secretly groaned was the yearly concert given by his sister in the village school house. The poor people of Harebrook, and the neighbouring farmers, cared little for classical music, and knew less: but they were very fond of

sentimental songs, and popular airs, and they liked to help in the affair themselves. Although Evelyn carefully inspected the programme, her brother writhed secretly, not once but many times, on such occasions. Still, no possibility of shirking ever entered his head, and the concert always came off in the end as a matter of course. This year's entertainment would form no exception to the general rule, and Evelyn's coming birthday had served, this evening, to fix the date of the performance.

Mrs. Godwin and her daughters drove home, but the night being fine, Godwin and Paul preferred to walk. A shower had fallen during dinner, and the sky now showed that luminously clear appearance so common after spring rain. The whole heavens were thick strewn with stars, beetles hummed across the grass, and dark bats, living shadows on wings of crape, flitted hither and thither. Like a line of ghostly sentinels, the trees in the long rides stood up black and silent, outlined against the sleeping twilight : and the delicate reflected traceries of branch, and leaf, and stalk, lay on the long grass forming a company of fairy shadows : bars of silver pursuing bars of darkness, swaying to and fro at the breath of the wandering wind. A night world unscorched by the sun, undefiled by speech, unbroken by a sound, save by the whisper in the trees : a night of silence and of May scented twilight.

The two men had nearly crossed the park before either of them spoke. Then Godwin said, somewhat abruptly :

"M. Réport has been talking to me this evening : he wants you to come to Paris in July. What do you think of this offer ?"

"I should like to accept it" said Paul slowly, "I would rather settle in Paris than anywhere else. I have nearly finished the play that I am writing, and I have begun upon a novel. Journalism isn't so much in my line, though I suppose one mustn't quarrel with what brings one money. I get well paid for my articles."

"I wish you could go in for something more paying than journalism or novel writing," said his father, "even supposing that your play should make a hit. You never come to me for money : I often wish that I could settle a better allowance on you. That hundred and fifty of your mother's is only a pittance, but you know that my affairs are, at present, in a very embarrassed state. Authorship is all very well for a single man, and I would be the last person to turn you from it, but if you were to marry you would find it hard to

support a household, unless you were more successful than the general percentage of writers."

"I shall never marry," said Paul.

"Has it ever struck you that you may be over scrupulous on that point, or that your scruples might at some future time bring sorrow into other lives besides your own?"

"I hope not," said Paul: "that sort of thing depends mostly upon the man, and not upon the woman in the first instance, doesn't it?"

"I am often tempted to wish that you could forget the past, Paul: some people could."

"Could they?" said Paul. "I think not."

"I trust," said John, in some emotion, "that you have bound yourself by no rash determination."

"The ground of my resolution was laid years ago, Dad: it has been growing ever since. Have you forgotten what I once saw? Have you forgotten my mother's end?"

"Hush! hush!" said the other hurriedly, "I cannot bear the re-opening of old wounds."

"Forgive me," said Paul, remorsefully.

For awhile the two walked on without speaking, then John said: "You are a Godwin, remember! In your case disaster is unlikely to follow you. You must know that: you must believe it."

He spoke pleadingly, but Paul's answer came back, low and almost stern.

"I can't believe it."

Beaten at one point, John tried another.

"At any rate," he said, "every woman has a right to choose for herself: a right of which it would be scarcely fair to deprive her. Perhaps some day you will fall in love, and then you will remember my words. Besides, your grandmother was in a worse position than yours: she made her own choice and married the Count with her eyes open."

"Do you think that she would have married him if she could have realised the future?"

"She was willing to risk it: she could not foresee the future, Paul."

"But he could," said Paul, a ring of indignation stirring now in his voice. "Brought up in a convent, with no more knowledge of

the outside world than a child, how was she to suspect all that such a contract contained or rather all that it lacked. There are some things burnt into me ; some things that I can never hope to forget."

There was silence between the two for the space of half a minute : presently Godwin spoke again : the hour seemed one for confidences in the half darkness.

"If you cannot forget the past, try at least to be happy in the present."

"I am, I shall be happy," said Paul affectionately. "A man cannot be said to have the right to give up what he has never had the right to expect. And it never, please God, shall be said of me, that I ran the risk of bringing despair into any woman's life. Say that you think I am right, Dad."

There was pain restrained and kept under, working now within him, the pain of one who has made up his mind to a certain course of action, yet would fain receive a word of understanding and encouragement.

For a moment Godwin was silent : then he said in a low voice :

"Boy, boy : I cannot at least say that I think you are wrong."

(To be continued.)

Boatman Jack.

The boatman stands on the yellow sands,
With his seventy years of life ;
And that's his boat that rides afloat,
Called " Polly " after his wife.
Tho' he's grey and old, and his years nigh told,
He's the cheeriest tar I know ;
He'll sing galore as he plies his oar
Of merry days long ago ;
And he'll carry ashore six lasses or more,
Then he'll cry " Yeo ho ! "

" A boat to-day, sir ? Just step this way, sir,
I'll row ye to sea and back ;
It's meself that's ready to row ye steady,
And so says ' boatman Ja—ck,'
And so says ' boatman Jack.' "

Sometimes he'll sigh, and folk ask him " Why
Do you gaze above so oft ? "
" Ah ! " sighs he, " My ould lass, she
Has left me and gone aloft.
In yonder skies, I see her eyes
Smile down on me below,—
A tear d'ye say ? But nay, lass, nay,
For I'll see her soon, I know."
But he wipes his eyes where the salt spray lies
As he sturdily cries " Yeo ho ! "

" A boat to-day, sir ? Just step this way, sir,
I'll row ye to sea and back ;
It's meself that's ready to row ye steady,
And so says ' boatman Ja—ck,'
And so says ' boatman Jack.' "

The Ideal House.

BY JOHN STRANGE WINTER.

IN THE MATTER OF THE NURSERY.

IN due course it is more than likely that our Edwin and Angelina will have to consider the question of the nursery part of their ideal establishment.

In London houses it is very much the custom to put the nursery as far as possible from the hall door—a very great mistake. My advice to Angelina, especially with the first baby, is to have her nursery or nurseries as near as possible to her own bedroom. If Angelina is not an inordinately heavy woman, she should have her baby with her at night for certainly the first eighteen months of the young existence. It is a great strain for a nurse, no matter how experienced, to have the care of a child both day and night. The first three months a little baby sleeps during certainly fifteen or sixteen hours out of the twenty-four, but, as vaccination, teething, and other infantile troubles come on, the hours of sleep get more broken into and the tax upon the nurse increases with every day. I have in the course of my perigrinations heard of marvellous persons who are able to manage baby and nursery unaided, who wait on their ladies, and make every stitch the child wears, besides doing odds and ends of needlework for other departments of the house. I was greatly reproached the other day by an unmarried lady who soundly took me to task for the wilful mismanagement of my own baby, and the contrast that my nursery presented to other women's nurseries. I did not argue the point—it is never worth discussing any matter with an unskilled opinion. I kept mine just where it was.

In any case Angelina will be best advised to have her nursery within earshot of herself. A good nurse, and any Angelina is a fool who does not insist on having her nurse as good as possible, a good nurse, who has nothing to conceal, never objects to the close proximity of her charge's mother, while in cases of illness either in nurse or child, it is invaluable to have them close at hand. Next to the mistress's own bedroom, the baby should have the best and most cheerful room in the house. And, Angelina, don't, *don't* have

your little soul's living room covered with linoleum! Don't, don't! It may be economical, but it is cold, bare, cheerless and horrid. I know people who say that it is so nice and clean, that it can just be washed over after the baby is in bed. I knew once a woman who had her nursery just washed over *every* night after her small baby was in bed and asleep, and there the child used to stay with the damp rising up under and around it, and that mother wondered that the child was cross and fretful during the day!

I prefer a square of good Brussels carpet to any other for a nursery. The floor may be stained and waxed between the edge of the carpet and the skirting of the wall. Let the walls be light, the blinds dark, the windows protected by brass or iron rods safely fixed, and let the fire-place be protected in a similar manner. A hearthrug is not only not a necessity but a positive drawback. I would advise Angelina not to have a regular baby's chair. They are always cockletry, to use a homely phrase. And as baby gets older there is always a strong inclination to fix the little feet against the edge of the table and enjoy the perils of tilting, the results of which are usually most disastrous, and may even be fatal.

On the walls have plenty of gay pictures. All the gay coloured prints of which we have so many at Christmas-time can be put into cheap frames—say eighteen-pence each—and a little child will derive the greatest pleasure therefrom, and will soon learn the little stories which they convey.

There should be an accurate clock in every nursery, and either a wide straight sofa or a small bed. It is better for a little child who drops asleep during the day, to be laid down in a warm room with a soft light wrap thrown over it, than to be carried to a cold room where it may get a chill. Besides that, whether the nurse is busy or taking a rest, or indulging in half an hour's reading, it is best for her to do so with her baby within sight of her.

A *toile ciré* or very superior table oil-cloth is a fine thing for a nursery table. I do not know if these can be bought in England, but in France they are in use for almost every household. They are cheap, are easily kept clean, and are made to closely imitate damask.

If the nursery has not a large cupboard, Angelina should indulge in a large painted wardrobe, wherein all baby's toys can be kept. I don't consider that any good woman would keep a sewing-machine

in her child's room. I used to possess such a thing, but it was always kept in an adjacent bedroom.

A couple of capacious easy chairs are most necessary, and baby should have a black and rush-bottomed elbow chair in which to sit at table. A couple of fairly fine cushions will raise a small child to the height necessary for comfort.

It is a good plan to have a gas-ring or Beatrice stove on a table outside the nursery door. With this, food can be prepared to a nicety at any moment, without any feeling of obligation to the kitchen below.

As to the care of the nursery, let Angelina see that it is beautifully kept, but also that the child's life is not spoiled thereby. I mean that she should not let the nurse be too severe on the child, in the way of tidiness. It is not habitual for a little child to be tidy, any more than it is for it to be always clean. A child should be thoroughly washed every morning, and it should have its little hands washed before going to bed. During the day there should be off-times, when little pinafores may be real dirty, little hands and faces grubby and sticky. Don't, my good Angelina, after your baby has begun to crawl about and enjoy a blessed state of dirt, get into a habit of sending up for Baby to show it off to all and sundry who come to visit you. Remember that to Baby it means an irksome and loathly process of face and hand washing, and the changing of one garment at least; enough to bring any average baby down in a bad temper. Tell me, do you know anything more annoying than to have to abandon some delightful occupation, say cleaning your bicycle, or giving your palms and other green plants a much-needed soap and water bath, and to make a hurried toilette that you may appear civil to some wholly indifferent visitors whom you never saw before, and devoutly hope you may never see again? Don't forget that the baby is even less interested in visitors than even you are. Most babies loathe visitors, strange people with unaccustomed voices, with rude fingers which take a fiendish pleasure in prodding soft little ribs, women with hearses on their heads and black window blinds over their faces, with great fur garments which render them fearful objects of terror to poor little souls who are used to nice homely nurses lilac printed frocks and nice white aprons, and "Muvver in a soft bright tea-gown, and perhaps a nice, clean-shaven "Dadda," in whose strong arms there is perfect safety.

Think what a little child, to whom all the world is new and strange, must feel when there bursts upon its horizon a strange, terrible creature, a cross between a hairy baboon and the inside of a horse-hair sofa! I am sure that it will be better for all the world, when persons require a formal introduction to small babies, and when it is considered a great liberty to kiss or touch a child under six years old. The present occupant of my nursery allows no liberties of this kind, and stands no nonsense from admiring strangers. She evidently believes that the child of twenty-two months old who hesitates is lost, for as soon as any hearse's heads, or other unaccustomed objects approach her, she puts out a widespread warning hand, and planting it firmly upon the part of the object meant to her, pushes with might and main, until the distance she considers desirable is attained.

How funny children are sometimes! A friend of mine had an only child, and the old nurse, who adored him, was quite the most grotesque human being I ever saw. One day I heard her say to her husband, in almost a vexed tone, "Old Lady Margaret came to-day, and Dicky simply wouldn't kiss her. She was so anxious he should; and I did my best, but he was as firm as a rock." "I don't wonder at it," said Dicky's father, "*I* wouldn't kiss Lady Margaret for any money." "But he kisses mamma," objected the mother. The husband was silent for a minute; then he burst out, "Well, mamma *is* a hideous old 'ooman," he said. "But hang me if I wouldn't rather kiss old 'oomans,' than Lady Margaret any day."

I have told the story before of the child who was sent for, to see some visitors. But I think it will bear telling again.

The visitor and the hostess were awaiting the arrival of Nurse and the children, when there came the sound of a scuffle at the drawing-room door. "I don't care," bawled an angry little voice, "tumpany or no tumpany, I won't have my face washed with spit."

I think the question of domestic pets may well be included in the matter of the nursery. It is a question of considerable niceness about which there are many mistaken opinions. Somehow we all think it a natural thing to see a nursery cat—and of course you remember Cuchie and the nursery cat in Ravenshoe! Well, of this Angelina may rest assured, that the nursery cat is a complete fraud. I have never known a cat brought up among children that was not ill-

tempered and vindictive. We have, at present, a thing in our establishment which is like a patchwork quilt for variety of breed, and I must say a more savage brute does not exist. She will come fawning and purring to one to be petted, and will then, without warning, lash out with her claws and bite like a fury. It has been the same with all our cats, and I believe the truth is that cats have soft ribs and suffer from over-loving more than dogs do. Dogs brought up with children are always affectionate and trustworthy; cats object to have their insides squeezed flat, and terms of endearment don't seem to soothe the internal agony at all. There is nothing like a dog for a nursery, but all other pets are a mistake. Birds get forgotten, guinea-pigs are stupid, rabbits smell and don't care for their little owners, doves may be tamed, but are very unlucky, and white rats and mice are disgusting. Depend on it, that a well-bred dog is the finest thing in the world for a child's pet, and after that a donkey or a pony.

As little folks grow older, each should have a bit of garden, and some sort of collection. Don't, dear Angelina, let them bicycle too early, don't let them go to evening parties too young, or to theatres till they can fully understand, don't begin lessons of any kind till they are seven years old at least. Keep them young, keep them happy; troubles will come soon enough—soon enough.

The Drama.

WITH the close of the season has also come the last representation of *David Garrick*, at the Criterion, but such an excellent melodrama which has commanded wide popular favour, will, no doubt before long, be revived. Mr. Charles Wyndham as David Garrick—the despised play-actor—played the part of the hero to perfection, and, although Act III was of a very harassing nature, and called forth considerable emotion on the part of the audience, they left in a happy frame of mind, as the closing scene brought the tragedy to a satisfactory conclusion.

Miss Mary Moore (who also enacted a similar rôle with Mr. Charles Wyndham in *The Physician*, previous to the performance of *David Garrick*) appeared to much better advantage as Ada Ingot, in *David Garrick*, than Edana Hinde in the former play. Indeed, she had quite lost the somewhat stagey manner that was noticeable in Edana Hinde, and as Ada Ingot won the sympathy of the whole house.

Mr. William Farren ably supported *David Garrick* as the stern but devoted father of the heroine; and all the minor parts were carried out with happy effect.

The *Yashmak* at the Shaftesbury commends itself to those who prefer the gay to the grave, and Mr. George Humphrey, as Mr. Hojb's friend, never failed to elicit laughter whenever his melancholy visage appeared.

This musical play is a story of the East, and we have a peep into an oriental harem, and some good stage effects. The project conceived by Bustapha Pasha, the Sultan's factotum, to carry off two European ladies from the hotel where they are staying, naturally leads to some exciting scenes.

Another musical play, at the Opera Comique—*The Maid of Athens*—must not be overlooked by those who appreciate real comedy. To say that the play is excellent only conveys a feeble idea of the farcical success of the piece. From first to last the audience are fairly carried away by the comedy, and *The Maid of Athens* scored a triumph.

M. W.

LONDON SOCIETY.

SEPTEMBER, 1897.

“Forbidden.”

By HELEN F. HETHERINGTON,

Part Author of “PAUL NUGENT, MATERIALIST,” “NO COMPROMISE,”
“LED ON,” etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A RECONCILIATION.

THE loud, prolonged, and oft repeated whistles for the two hansoms proclaimed to all who might wish to know that Lord Falconer's guests were about to leave.

Beatrice heard the noise and felt as if she were relieved of an unpleasant burden, when at last there came a rattle of wheels. Warren had put away her dress, locked her ornaments in the dressing-case, brushed out her long dark hair, tidied up the room, and gone to her bed, but not to sleep with her usual celerity. The maid was almost as indignant as her mistress. She had the consolation of the butler's perfect sympathy, and they had looked volumes at each other over the bannisters. Simmonds had pursed up his lips, and shaken his head, whilst she had frowned expressively and had even gone so far as to double up her fist, in wild dramatic by-play. She was very plain, with flat straight hair arranged in a coil at the back of a prosaic head, and a figure of straight lines and angles. Falconer, who was governed by the eye in his estimate of women, took an inveterate dislike to her, and Warren was conscious of it, and in fact prided herself upon it. She thought it was a proof of her own impregnable respectability, and she smiled grimly whenever his glance fell upon her, for it was sure to be quickly withdrawn. In spite of her apparent austerity she had an excellent heart, and when she went to her room that night, she could get no rest for thinking of her mistress. If the

master began like this so soon after the wedding, how would it end? she kept asking herself as the time slowly went by, and at last when she fell asleep, she dreamt that she and her ladyship were making their escape in a grocer's cart, when up came his Lordship, and shot the horse dead with his revolver. The shock of feeling herself in the air in the act of flying over the horse's head woke her up with a start to find herself in bed, with a subdued noise going on as if some one were knocking at a door, on the landing beneath her. In a moment all her senses were on the alert, and she sat up to listen. Not satisfied with the small amount that reached her ears, she threw a shawl over her shoulders, thrust her feet into her discarded shoes, and stole out on to the landing. Leaning over the banisters, she listened with straining ears and could scarcely credit what she heard. Could that be his lordship's voice, soft and tender as she had never known it before—and after the scandalous "break-out" of that very evening too, which seemed to prove that he had no regard at all for his wife's feelings?

"Bee, dear—let me in—I want to make it up—on my honour! I am as sorry as I can be. Do let me in—there's a darling!"

The door opened, and the astonished maid crept back to her bed, feeling sure that a miracle had been worked in that house, let who would say they were over.

When Beatrice first heard her husband's knock, she thought he had come to abuse her for having asserted her dignity by leaving the house, and she instantly resolved to let him go on knocking till the day broke before she would open the door. But when she found that his attitude had changed, that he came to ask forgiveness instead of to insult, then, unlike the new women of the present day, she remembered her wifely duty and threw it open—with a slight fear in her heart, which he read at once in the glance of her eyes.

He was too thick-skinned to feel it as any other man would have felt it who had enjoyed his chances of civilisation; but still it affected him to a slight degree, and he held out his hands to her with a new sensation of dawning shame.

"I'm just as fond of you as I ever was," he mumbled as he drew her towards him, and pressed a burning kiss upon her white cheek. Then with a sudden burst of penitence and passion, he folded his strong arms about her, and held her close to his panting chest. "There is no one like you—and I've been a fool—and a brute!" he

exclaimed huskily, as for once in his life he saw his own conduct in the cold white light of truth. A passionate craving for her love—the love that she had given to him, so freely and abundantly at the first, came over him, and his clasp tightened till she was nearly suffocated. Then she drew herself away from him determinedly, and sat down on the sofa, half bewildered. He placed himself at once by her side, and hung over her, his eyes devouring her face. “You do care for me, don’t you? You’ve not forgotten how to love me—little woman?”

She put her hands before her eyes, as if she could not bear the fire of his. Did she love him?—Only an hour ago she hated him, wildly, fiercely. She would have taken it as a piece of good news if somebody had told her that she would never see him again. He drew her hands away, and held them in his warm grasp. “Bee, you haven’t given me a kiss for weeks.”

“Did you ask me for one when you came in this afternoon?” she said, slowly. Could it be this last afternoon—it seemed as if the day, or at least the latter part of it, had been a year long.

“I was an idiot—I’ve been mad for the last fortnight.”

“And you will be mad again to-morrow or the next day,” in a low voice.

“Never again, I swear it,” studying the bold sweep of her black brows, the delicate curve of her cheek, as if he had forgotten half the beauties of her face.

“You will, I know you will—oh I’m afraid of loving you as I did before,” she cried, passionately, with a broken sob, and then overcome and overstrung, the tension gave way, and she burst into a tempest of tears.

Falconer put his arms round her and let her sob out all her troubles on the lapel of his dress-coat. He pulled his moustache and thought over many things, whilst his wife was, as he expressed himself, letting off the steam. As to Nina Sartoris, he shivered with repulsion—the repulsion which came from his newly resuscitated conjugal affection. He had come to a pretty pass certainly. For the sake of this woman, who looked something between a Fury and a Mænad when he last saw her, he had risked the loss of one of the handsomest women in London. He stooped and kissed her dark hair as he thought of it. It was her beauty which had seized his fancy in the first instance, and it was that alone which brought him back to her. He fancied

that it was penitence and remorse, but it was nothing of the kind. He broke out into passionate protestations of amendment, and he was likely to keep them just so long as the temptation to desert her was not quite so strong as her own power to attract him, but not one instant longer.

To Sir Digby's astonishment, Falconer appeared with his wife at Burlington House the next day. In a fit of sudden disgust at his associates, he had patched up a sort of reconciliation with Beatrice, and he only left her in a hurry because he caught sight of Jack Sartoris standing before one of his own pictures.

He played the part of a model husband as far as he understood it for the rest of the winter, and Lady Malvern, who had returned to town, watched him with a wondering eye. She invited the Falconers to dinner on Christmas Day, when they met a strange collection of waifs and strays stranded in London by the determination of their belongings to spend the festive season on their country estates, or by the force of other circumstances. Young Attachés and Secretaries of Legation turned up in force, for there was always a residuum at Legation or Embassy who could not get long enough leave to go anywhere at a distance—and the old lady gave a hearty welcome to all. It was such an agreeable surprise to her to find Falconer behaving at all like a gentleman, and Beatrice consequently with a tolerably peaceful expression, that she felt most unusually amiable. Geoffrey Talbot had been invited to a score of houses, but having found out through the wiles of diplomacy that Lady Falconer would be at her aunt's, he turned up at the last moment on the plea that he was absolutely alone in London.

"Alone indeed! whose fault is that?" the old lady asked with a mischievous twinkle in her eyes.

"My own, I suppose, as I'm so glad of it," and he went off at once to where Beatrice was sitting with two or three men already round and about.

Val Forrester on the other hand was a legitimate claimant for Lady Malvern's hospitality. His people were all on the Riviera, and he was kept in London by an examination for which he was supposed to be wearing himself out with the extent of his cramming. When he got a chance of speaking to Lady Falconer, he asked with interest after that "awfully fetching" Miss Vivian, and declared it was a fearful shame that she should be hidden away in the country, when

he elicited the fact that she was spending the Christmas at St. Christopher's.

Beatrice's thoughts often strayed to St. Christopher's during the course of the evening. It was the first Christmas that she had ever passed without her father, and she knew how terribly she would be missed by him, and dear old Aunt Judy. The Pembertons were going down for it—both uncle and nephew, and Flo would be brought over by the Wentworths, and she could imagine how heartily they would all drink the health of the absent one, whilst a tear would run down into Auntie's wineglass, of which she would be very much ashamed. And Flo would play off Hugh against that much tried Mr. Carrington, and enjoy herself as thoroughly as she always contrived to do when she had two men of opposite natures to practice on. Her father had written her one of his rare letters, in which he told her that the ordination had gone off very well. He had been much pleased with some of the candidates and especially with George Wenham, who had got over all his difficulties, and now promised to be a credit to the Church—instead of a danger. Judith managed most excellently, and her house-keeping passed through the trying ordeal with flying colours; but now that the work was over, and they had time to think of something else besides the spiritual and bodily needs of seventeen embryo priests and deacons, the longing for his little girl was growing rampant, and the hole that her absence made in their circle was vast as Olympia itself.

She was thinking of them all when she found Talbot's fine pair of eyes fixed upon her reproachfully, and she roused herself to enquire the reason.

"I have asked you twice if you have any commissions for Paris," he said, feeling highly aggrieved, for he was accustomed to being much petted by women.

"I must have heard you if you had spoken—I believe you only tried to influence my brain by means of a wave of thought like Mr. Stead and his correspondents."

"No, Lady Falconer, my aim is never so high as the brain; but wherever I try you are always invulnerable," with a sigh.

"I don't take it as a compliment that you think nothing of my brain," she said mischievously. "I rather pride myself on my intelligence."

"I wish you wouldn't. It's the most dangerous thing for a woman—takes her on to a platform, you know, where no one can talk except in speeches."

"But the speeches might do an immense amount of good."

"Or an infinity of harm. It's a toss up. Besides, when you talk to me, I don't want five hundred other people to listen, I should prefer to be in your charming den and to have you all to myself."

"And I should infinitely prefer my den to a platform," she said with emphasis. Immediately Talbot gave her a fervent look, and murmured, "That is the kindest thing you have said to me;" and her husband glared across the table in a sudden access of jealousy, not having heard the innocent speech, but only judging by its effects.

In the evening it was unanimously decided that as there were no children they must pretend to be juvenile, and play games, or they would not be keeping Christmas properly. Lady Malvern made Geoffrey Talbot master of the revels, and he threw himself into the part with enthusiasm. He introduced a game which he declared that they often played at the Embassy. The company divided themselves into two parts—one side of the room they were "persons" on the other side "towns," and the difference between them was this, that the persons ran about in couples, whilst the towns were always single, and when the former changed places with the latter they were obliged to find room for their two selves on a seat for one. As there were not enough chairs, different pieces of furniture were brought into requisition, and a "town" bent on mischief always selected a position of some difficulty. There were many complications which nobody felt sure of, unlimited opportunities of flirtation which almost everybody made use of, and a constant succession of ludicrous incidents which all enjoyed, so that the fun waxed furious. Lady Malvern was in the thickest of the fray, doubled up with laughter on her own *Érard* with the smallest *Attaché* of the Spanish Embassy to keep her company, whilst Talbot and Lady Falconer had to balance themselves on the small surface of a rickety music-stool which was all that a malignant "town" had left them; and Falconer found himself on a Persian rug with a slight gilt chair smashed under his weight, and Vere Haughton flushed and tottery looking as if she were going involuntarily to settle on his shins.

Beatrice became for the time almost as light-hearted as Flora

Vivian, and Geoffrey Talbot was more and more delighted with her. When he took her to the carriage in the cold white moonlight he felt as sentimental as any schoolboy.

"To-morrow," he whispered. "In the den—a solitude à deux"

"To-morrow if you like—but as to the solitude," she laughed and gave a slight shrug to her shoulders.

"But you promised it," eagerly, for he felt as if he were being defrauded of his rights.

"You must be dreaming, Mr. Talbot," rather coldly.

"On my soul, I swear it," in the midst of his protestations he had to step aside to let Falconer get into the brougham, and after the carriage had driven off, he still stood there, in spite of the cold, looking as if he were puzzled.

"Lost anything?" Falconer asked, as Beatrice appeared to be searching under the fur rug.

"Only the ribbons from my fan. I suppose they came untied."

"You gave them to that young idiot?" suspiciously.

"No, I never do that sort of thing," looking down her nose.

"Humph! Give him his congé—I think it's about time," frowning angrily out of the window at the gleaming lights in Piccadilly.

"I have liked Mr. Talbot ever since we met him in Paris," Beatrice said, quietly.

"The fellow's in love with you, and you encourage him," sulkily.

"He puts on that sort of devoted air with every woman. It means absolutely nothing."

"He stuck to you like a pickpocket, he stared at you as if he were counting the hairs in your eye-lashes. He seemed to think you were his property instead of mine," working himself up into a rage.

"Be sure that he is hugely glad that I am not," she answered, with an amused laugh. "And if you want to quarrel, wait till we are out of the carriage for there really isn't room."

Fortunately they stopped at their own door the next moment, and mollified by her evident indifference, Falconer allowed the subject to drop for the time.

CHAPTER XXX.

JAMES PEMBERTON EXERTS HIMSELF.

SEVERAL people dropped in at Clifford House the next day, and it was anything but a romantic "*solitude à deux*" that Geoffrey Talbot found there on his arrival. Beatrice felt that there might be a grain of justice in her husband's remarks, so she invited one or two friends to tea in order that they might act as a wholesome check upon his ardour, and she nearly laughed aloud as she saw the blank look that came over his eager face. When he found the *tête-à-tête* changed into such an everyday affair as an afternoon party, he would not make himself agreeable to Mrs. Haughton or her sister—rather a nice girl with a pleasant manner—but sat on a low chair by the fire pulling his moustache so persistently that Beatrice thought it must soon come out by the roots. The whole room was fragrant with his violets, but there was no bunch where he looked for it, either in her waistband or in the front of her dress. She had thanked him for them gratefully when he came in, but he would rather that she had said nothing and worn some of them to show how she prized them. He found a small opportunity for talk when he stood up between her and the rest of her guests, on pretence of helping with the tea.

"Nothing you want from Paris?" he asked again, for he wished to make some excuse for a correspondence, "a hat or a bonnet—a fan—or a dozen of gloves?"

"No, I have heaps of everything—get me a new memory," suddenly. "Isn't Paris the city of forgetfulness?" as she poured the tea from the dainty tea-pot into the Dresden cups.

"That sounds rather paradoxical, doesn't it?"

"Not at all. A new memory implies a blank one to begin with."

"And why do you of all people want to forget?" lowering his voice as he asked it.

"I only want to remember pleasant things. Not the day that I was drenched by a storm, but the other days when the sun shone."

As he took up a cup in his hand, he translated this into days "when my brute of a husband slangs me, not the others when I have a good time," and his eyes were full of pity as he looked down into her young face, and assured her that the sun should always shine for her if he had any influence over the clerk of the weather.

"Take care, you are spilling Mrs. Haughton's tea," she exclaimed, prosaically, with a twinkle of fun in her eyes, which had more effect than her caution. He took the tea and the snub, and handed the cakes, and then came back to fetch his own cup.

"Lady Falconer, if I get the memory may I put myself down on the first page?"

"No, I must put everything down for myself, or else it will be yours and not mine."

"But you will give me a place in it?"

"Some more water, please."

He turned the tap of the small silver urn with such energy that he filled the tea-pot to the brim. "You haven't answered my question."

"Be content, I shall *never* forget you—because you have spoilt the tea," she added, with a provoking smile, and he went off at once in a huff.

For weeks Beatrice heard nothing more of the young diplomat, till she received a parcel from the Foreign Office which had evidently been forwarded in the F. O. bag from Paris. On opening it she found a handsomely bound book with blank pages, and a lock and key. There was a scrap of paper inside, on which was written in a bold hand,

"A new memory."—"From one who hopes to be remembered on its pages."

"Absurd fellow! As if I meant it!" she exclaimed with a laugh. "Just as if I had asked him to give me a present—shall I keep a diary?—it might amuse me when I've nothing else to do, and it would be a thousand pities to waste such a beautiful book."

From that day she began to write down any incident that happened, but for some reason her husband could not bear to see her with her pen in her hand, and the open book before her. Possibly he thought that it would develop into a mere catalogue of his own misdemeanours, which might be brought up against him on some future occasion. He objected to the little gold key which Beatrice always wore on her watch-chain, and told her she must be putting very odd things in it, or she would not be so particular about locking it up,

"If a diary is to be public property, it can only contain the baldest generalities," she assured him—an obvious truth which he

refused to see. As he continued to make unpleasant remarks upon it, she hid it away in an inlaid cabinet, where it would not attract his attention, and only pulled it out when he was not likely to disturb her. Experience was making her wary, and she was always careful to put aside every cause for quarrel; but unfortunately her own health which began to be delicate, later on, became a source of frequent trouble. She had to fight shy of dinner-parties and balls, as soon as the full tide of entertainments set in, in the spring; and Falconer, whom it had been difficult to drag out with her on most occasions, from sheer perversity grumbled about every invitation that she refused. He liked to hear his wife talked of as the handsomest woman at the Duchess of So and So's reception, and it gave him a feeling of intense satisfaction to know that other men were envying him the rôle of her husband. It was also convenient to have somebody else keeping up the respectability of his name, as he shirked the trouble of doing so himself. As Beatrice grew more and more unequal to any exertion, the husband and wife drifted hopelessly apart. He was always going off to race-meetings in one direction or another, and as he never took the trouble to write unless he wanted something done for him, she could only guess his whereabouts by looking in the *Morning Post* for the dates of Epsom, Sandown, Kempton, Ascot or Goodwood. As to the smaller events, she knew nothing, so that she could not follow him even in fancy. It would have been a dreary time for her, only Flora Vivian was allowed to spend several weeks with her, and Millie Crosby showed that she possessed a heart, after all, in constantly coming to see her. She usually brought up a whole budget of gossip which she unfolded in the most amusing manner; but she was obliged to keep back one tit-bit, that Jack Sartoris's wife had run away from him, and that the artist had sworn, melo-dramatically, to shoot her betrayer and himself as well. The story gave an additional interest to his last picture, which was hanging in the most envied place on the walls of the Lecture-room in Burlington House; but it had robbed Sartoris of all the sweetness of success, and he was now a broken-hearted man with all the energy taken out of him. Fashion took him up, after her whimsical way, and orders poured in so quickly that if he could have worked night and day he would hardly have been able to keep up with them. But instead of finding consolation in his art, Jack Sartoris spent most of his time pacing wildly up and down his

studio, brooding over his wrongs, and wasting the splendid opportunities which were opening for him on every side. He was going to the dogs as fast as he could—idleness making havoc of his talents, whilst the opium he took as a draught of Lethe unsteadied his hand and coloured his brain, when James Pemberton came forward to save him from ruin. For many years he had known the artist slightly, and he had always gone to the private view of his pictures, before they were submitted to the judgment of the Academy. His objection to the artist's wife had been equal in degree to his admiration for his pictures, but it had never sufficed to keep him away. Knowing the trouble that had fallen upon Jack Sartoris, he put himself in the Underground one fine day and turned up in Bloomfield Road, St. John's Wood—much to Sartoris's astonishment. Pemberton, in spite of his rather dry exterior, had stores of kindness hidden away in odd corners of his heart, and it was impossible for him to stand by in quiescent indifference whilst the poor young fellow was ruining his career at the moment of its flood-tide. By the energy of his counsels he insisted upon rousing him from his torpor. "Work—man—work," he said, with his eyes kindling, "there's nothing like it. It has saved more men than you know of from despair. Surely there must have been a time when Art was everything to you, and the whole of the rest of the world absolutely nothing. Go back to it, rouse up your enthusiasm, and as soon as you get your brush in your hand, and you see your picture growing under your eyes, you will forget yourself, and all your bothers, and find peace, and hope at the tip of your brush."

Sartoris shook his head disconsolately. "Peace has gone for ever. Only revenge remains."

"Then you are not the artist, I thought you. Your pictures are only pot-boilers, not the outcome of genius, which insists upon expression. I had a higher opinion of you, I confess," and Pemberton's chin lengthened.

"I tell you as long as that scoundrel remains unpunished, I can think of nothing else," passing his hand through his thick dark hair with a restless gesture. "Only tell me where he is—that is all I ask."

"You couldn't thrash him, for he is double your size, and if you shot him, you would hang for it, when your fate would be worse than his. He will go to perdition fast enough without your help,

but there is no reason for you to follow him," sternly, for he had an idea that Sartoris's threats were not mere empty talk.

"Mr. Pemberton, I feel done for," looking round at his rigid face with haggard eyes.

"No doubt," intense pity in his heart, which however he bottled up as tight as possible, "but if anyone lays you on the flat of your back in the dust, you needn't stay there for ever. Stand up, and show there's some grit in you, there's a good fellow. Make yourself famous. Work hard—there's nothing like it," he repeated, "get to the top of the tree. They say the air's uncommonly refreshing up there—I never felt it myself," in a quaint aside.

"You are very good to have bothered yourself about me," Sartoris mumbled, as he took his pipe from his mouth, and shook out the ashes.

"Pshaw! You bothered me so, that I could not keep away. Next time I come, I shall expect that canvas to be half filled in."

"That's an order from Balbrygan—the new American," Sartoris said quietly. A few weeks before an order from the lately arrived Millionaire would have made him execute a war-dance round the room, but now he mentioned it as if it were of no importance, and his legs had not a single skip in them.

James Pemberton opened his eyes wide. Such maniacal indifference to his own interests seemed to him positively contemptible, "If you let such a chance slip, you never deserve to have another," he said with severity, and then he left, hoping that his words might sting the artist into action as soon as his back was turned.

From St. John's Wood he went to Curzon Street, led there by a natural process of thought. Now that Falconer was so conveniently out of the way, he had resumed his former relations with his old friend, and Beatrice always gave him a warm welcome. Lady Malvern appeared every now and then, when she could spare time from her multitudinous engagements, which had a wide range, from the Spring Meeting at Epsom, to the S.P.E. gathering in St. James's Hall. She knew more about Falconer's movements than most people, and he had sunk to a very low level in her opinion; but she forgave him much because he kept himself out of the way, and left his wife in peace. Some people fancied that Lady Falconer was quite happy at this time, but they did not enter into the feelings of the wife. The clergy of a neighbouring church knew better, for

often after the daily service was over, they saw a figure which they had begun to identify as hers kneeling in some dark corner, sobbing out her troubles where she thought nobody but God could hear her. She would not play the part of a neglected wife before her friends; but down in the depths of her heart was a well of bitterness, which she hid as if it were a crime. And all this time Hugh Pemberton never came near her. When she asked if he had forgotten her, his uncle said that he was wrapt up in his soldiering, to the exclusion of everything else.

"Never knew a fellow make a craze of his own business, though scores do it about other people's. He evidently means to go in for promotion and nothing else, and we shan't see him again till he has developed into a Colonel."

"And by that time we may be in our coffins."

"Exactly, and it won't afford me the least particle of comfort to know that I have a military swell as chief mourner."

CHAPTER XXXI.

A HUSBAND—AND SOMETHING BESIDES.

ONE very wet afternoon in the month of July, Lord Falconer arrived at his own door in a hansom, and proceeded to let himself in with his latch-key. Not a sound was to be heard in the house as he hung up his hat, and brushed back his black hair. With his slow heavy step he mounted the stairs, and at the same time heard the drawing-room door open above him. In another moment, he was face to face with his father-in-law, on the landing, and he wished himself a mile off out of sight or ear-shot.

The Bishop's anger had been increasing from day to day, and he had to exercise his strongest powers of self-constraint to prevent it from bursting out in a most un-episcopal fashion, when his son-in-law with his "devil-may-care" expression stood before him. "So here you are at last," he said, sternly, as he fixed his eyes upon him, without attempting to shake hands, for Edward Kennard with all his charity was not the sort of man to cry out "peace" when there was no peace.

"I don't know what you mean by at last?" sullenly.

"I mean that you have stayed away until all is over, (a cold

thrill ran down Falconer's spine, as the question darted across his brain, "Is Beatrice dead?") You have forgotten that you are a husband—perhaps it will surprise you to hear that you are a father," the Bishop said slowly.

Falconer recovered himself at once, and answered coolly: "Not in the least. I knew it was coming."

"And you stayed away, not caring to learn whether your wife were likely to live through it, or to die?" the Bishop asked, his voice vibrating with the intensity of his feelings, as he thought of his neglected child.

"Much good I should have done," the Earl answered, as impassive as a cow, as he leant against the wall with his hands in his pockets. "She is sure to have the cleverest of doctors, the best of nurses, not to mention father and aunt, and all the rest."

"And only her husband away!" in keenest reproach.

Taking no notice of this remark, he asked if it were a boy or a girl.

"A boy, and I pray God that he may be brought up to be a Christian and a gentleman," the Bishop said solemnly, knowing that if the father had a hand in the boy's education, the result would not be an answer to his prayer.

"I can promise you one thing," Falconer said, with sudden energy as he looked straight into the earnest face before him, and felt the repulsion that patent goodness so often produces on the bad, "the little brat shall be brought up free of all cant and humbug."

"I was not aware that you had ever been accused of either," Kennard retorted quickly, and then he was sorry for it, for he knew that sarcasm never softened a ruffian's heart. He had to preach in a West End Church, and get to the North East first to have his dinner, and—still more important—to fetch his notes, but he was loth to go, for here was this man before him, and he had not yet unburthened his heart of more than a fraction of his righteous wrath. But then he thought of his child upstairs looking so unusually fragile, with that tired look in her large eyes, in spite of the tender smile of motherly joy on her lips; if he parted with his son-in-law in anger, the latter might revenge himself by rushing up to his wife, and killing her by a burst of passion. Already the Earl had turned to the stairs, as if he meant to mount them as soon as he had got rid of his father-in-law. In the emergency of the moment, the Bishop

spoke in a softer tone, "Your wife is very weak—the slightest excitement would do her harm. Might I ask you not to go to her—just yet?"

He had stayed away voluntarily week after week, so it seemed but a small thing to ask him to deny himself a sight of her for twenty-four hours, but Dr. Kennard was far from understanding the perversity of his son-in-law's character. He had come back simply to suit his own convenience, because his own house was a comfortable place to stop in on his way to Goodwood. He had thought of his wife occasionally, it is true, and wondered how she was getting on, but he had never suffered from a keen anxiety to see her, until the Bishop proffered his request that he should not. After that nothing would have kept him from her room, certainly not danger to anybody else, possibly not risk to himself.

"You've seen her, I suppose—and Miss Kennard?" he asked, as he put his foot on the first step.

"For five minutes—my sister for a little longer, but no one could call her a disturbing influence," with a slight smile, as he thought of the quiet figure behind the curtain, scarcely daring to breathe, or to move so much as a finger.

"And the husband is the only one to be kept out!" Falconer answered with a short laugh. "I shall certainly go and see her—she would think me a brute if I didn't, but I promise you," relenting suddenly, as he remembered that the father's anxiety was excusable, "that I will be as cautious as any old woman."

Then having nodded a farewell to the Bishop, who looked at his watch and fled, he went up-stairs to carry out his purpose.

"Her ladyship is asleep, and mustn't be woke on any account," the Nurse explained, in a frightened whisper, as she saw the tall form come in.

"Don't be a fool," he said in a low voice as she tried to block his path. "I am her husband," and putting her aside, he walked as softly as he could to the side of the bed. Then he pointed to the door, and she obeyed reluctantly, with many a backward look over her shoulder, but yet constrained to go by the imperious look in his eyes.

Beatrice was asleep, her dark lashes resting on the creamy whiteness of her cheeks, her red lips slightly parted; one hand looking strangely thin and transparent was laid on the white silk coverlet,

the other was under her cheek. The bed, with all its dainty accessories of lace and silken draperies tied back by broad white sashes, looked like a snowy nest, prepared for a tired bird. As Falconer looked down at his young wife, a certain amount of awe stole over him. Could this be Beatrice? He thought of her merry laugh, her eyes so full of fun and mischief, her high spirits, her indomitable pluck—her strong will which could resist his own without flinching. Could this be the same girl? She might be lying there as a model of passive endurance, but no one could imagine that she would ever have the strength or the spirit to defend a right, or protest against a wrong. He could understand the one, but not the other, and he felt as if she had dissociated herself so completely from him, that she scarcely belonged to him any longer. As if to reassure himself, however, as to the fact that she was still his property, he stooped down and kissed her. She opened her eyes as his tobacco-scented breath passed over her face—and smiled; but in a sudden access of nervousness, as he thought of the Bishop's warnings, he feared to stay, and he hurried out of the room as quickly as he could on tip-toe.

"You would like to see the baby, my lord," the nurse said, as she caught him on his way downstairs, and looked as if she dared him to say that he would not.

Having followed her with unusual quickness into the nursery, he studied the bundle of clothes with the pink face at the top of it, with curious eyes.

"It's all there, I hope? Nothing wrong with its legs or arms?"

"The straightest and beautifullest limbs I ever saw," the nurse said emphatically, and with quite a freshness of emphasis, as if it were absolutely the first instead of the hundredth time she had made the same remark in the course of her interesting duties.

"Humph! glad to hear it," looking at his son with a speculative eye, and wondering if that nondescript little mite would ever grow up into a decent sized fellow, capable of holding his own with the Clifford grip. "One baby is just like another," he went on, for the nurse's benefit, as he saw that she expected something more from him, "not half so interesting as a bull-pup."

Then he went away without further interruption, having quite unconsciously reduced her to a state of speechless indignation.

As soon as he had got out of the nursery, he began to wonder if

he ought not to have given the woman a tip. He consulted Simmons on the subject, but the butler told him that he believed that it was correct to reserve the present until the day of the christening.

"And when does that come off?" feeling an anticipatory annoyance at the thought that he might have to be there. "Not for six months—is it?"

"Entirely a matter of health or convenience, my lord," Simmons answered at once, without the slightest doubt that he was saying the right thing. "But I believe a month is the fashionable time."

Falconer made a mental calculation, and then remarked as the outcome of it, "Well, if it's after the twelfth, I shan't be here."

"No, I suppose not, my lord," Simmons rejoined with perfect truth, for he knew by long experience that his master never gave up any enjoyment for the sake of a duty.

Whilst Falconer was accustoming himself to a new phase in his life, a vast crowd was listening to his father-in-law in St. Ethelred's. The Bishop of St. Christopher's had attained some renown as a preacher, and that night it was generally acknowledged that he far surpassed even his usual average of excellence. He was preaching on the duties of home-life—a topic that was so near his own heart on that evening, that an occasional tremble in his deep voice gave an additional pathos to his words. As he depicted the ideal home of unselfish love and daily sympathy, where every happiness has an added joy and every sorrow a lessened weight, he saw before his mind's eye the young wife lying on her bed of pain whilst the husband, who ought to have been watching over her, in breathless anxiety, was wandering no one knew where, probably from race-course to race-course. And then he turned to the other side of the picture, and out of the bitterness in his daughter's experience, poured the whole fire of his eloquence on the sinner, whether man or woman—who defiled the Sanctuary of home, and turned the love into hatred that was steeped with scorn—the sympathy into aversion sodden with shame! The soft-hearted cried—the nervous quivered, a few thought of their own sins, many more of their neighbour's, and with a curious unanimity most of them agreed as they streamed out of the hot church into the refreshing coolness of an English summer night, that they ardently wished that "So and so" and "So and so" had been there to profit by the Bishop's warning, instead of taking it to themselves.

(To be continued.)

Wolf-Madness

(LYCANTHROPY.)

By A. M. JUDD.

PART I.

By Wolf-madness is meant, not hydrophobia, which occasionally attacks wolves as well as other animals, but that far more terrible malady, which, in almost all nations, and in all ages, afflicted men and made them fancy themselves wolves, and act as such.

Half the world believed that certain persons had the power of changing themselves into beasts, and indeed the superstition is not wholly extinct in the present day. In parts of France the peasants still firmly believe in the *loups-garoux*, and will not pass their haunts after nightfall.

Wehr-wolves were called by different names in different places. The French called them *loups-garoux*; the Bretons, *Bisclaveret*; in Normandy they were designated garwolves, and they were known in the Perigord as *loulérous*. With regard to these latter, bastards were supposed to be obliged at each full moon to transform themselves into these beasts, and in the form of *loulérous* to pass the night ranging over the country, biting and devouring any animals, but more especially dogs, they might meet. Sometimes they were made ill in consequence of having eaten tough old hounds, and vomited up their undigested paws.

The belief in wehr-wolves has come down from the earliest times, from ancient mythology and classic fable. Ovid tells the story of Lycaon, king of Arcadia, who, to test the omniscience of Jupiter, served up for him a dish of human flesh, and was promptly punished by the god for his insolence, by being transformed into a wolf.

That there was a wide-spread superstition of lycanthropy, or wolf-madness, is undoubted, and the belief in a creature combining human intelligence with wolfish ferocity and demoniac strength, was especially strong and prevalent in the middle ages. To this day the idea is still cherished by peasants in remote and secluded parts of Europe.

There was a basis of truth on which the wehr-wolf superstition

rested. The old Norse freebooters were celebrated for the murderous frenzy, "Berseker rage," which possessed them at times. The craving for blood and rapine, stimulated by their ravages in summer climes, was developed at home into a strange homicidal madness. When the fit was on them, they would go forth at night, dressed in the skins of wolves and bears, and crush the skulls, or cleave the backbones of any unfortunate belated traveller they might meet, whose blood they sometimes drank. In their frenzied excitement, they acquired superhuman strength and insensibility to pain, and, as they rushed about with glaring eyeballs, gnashing their teeth, foaming at the mouth, and howling like wild beasts, it is not strange that the terrified peasantry should have regarded them as veritable wehr-wolves. Great exhaustion and nervous depression followed these attacks. According to the Norse historians this "Berseker rage" was extinguished by baptism.

The belief in these transformations in the middle ages derived a new and terrible significance from its connection with witchcraft. The ancients regarded the subjects of metamorphoses with superstitious reverence. Divine natures were believed to assume earthly forms, and human beings were supposed to assume, after death, the shapes of those animals their natures most resembled, but these mythological conceptions were degraded by the mediæval christians, into diabolical influences. The Church, jealous of miraculous powers exercised beyond its pale, denounced the wehr-wolf as a devil. Thus a person suspected of beast metamorphosis ran the double risk of losing both his soul and his life, of being anathematized by the clergy, and then burnt at the stake. Ignorance of the phenomena of mental disease led to a belief that its victims were ministers of the Evil One, and even mere eccentricity was often fatal to its unfortunate possessor. These ideas were strengthened by some terrible instances of homicidal insanity, occasionally accompanied by cannibalism and lycanthropic hallucinations which were often ascribed to demoniac agency.

The saints were believed to have a power similar to that of the demons. Vereticus, king of Wales, was said to have been transformed into a wolf by St. Patrick, and another saint doomed the members of an illustrious family in Ireland to become wolves for seven years, prowling among the bogs and forests, uttering mournful howls, and devouring the peasants' sheep to allay their hunger.

Though imprisoned in a lupine form, the unfortunate victims were believed to retain their human consciousness, and in some cases their voices, and to yearn for an alleviation of their condition.

The superstitious belief in lycanthropy is of very remote antiquity and its origin is involved in much obscurity. It pervaded Greece, Rome, Germany and other nations; even in England it was prevalent in the middle ages, and was supposed to have come down from the Chaldeans and other nomadic people, who had unceasingly to defend their flocks from the attacks of wolves. The terror that those ferocious beasts spread by prowling at night round the folds proved favourable to malefactors, who, assuming the guise of furious wolves, were the better enabled to perpetrate acts of theft or vengeance.

This lycanthropy was a disease, and a very terrible one. The victims of the hallucination that they were wehr-wolves were undoubted madmen who fully believed they were able to transform themselves into wolves. At the present day some of the inmates of lunatic asylums fancy they can turn themselves at will into beasts, and howl and gnash their teeth in decided wolfish fashion.

Sometimes the wehr-wolves were satisfied with rending and tearing sheep and drinking their blood, but in others this insane appetite took the still more horrible form of cannibalism. Animal flesh would not satisfy their dreadful cravings; human beings, generally children, falling victims to this frightfully depraved taste.

There is another revolting phase that this madness took. Occasionally persons were transformed into human hyenas. Their craving was not, as was that of lycanthropists, for fresh, warm human flesh, they preferred their tit-bits to have been kept some time, as game is hung in order to make it tender; in other words these hyena victims of the terrible malady preferred to dig the corpses out of the graveyards. They were seized with an irresistible desire to enter cemeteries and rifle the newly-made graves so that they might enjoy their gruesome repast.

Strangely enough, these human ghouls were sometimes found in the ranks of the upper classes, unlike the majority of those who killed their victims; these latter being, for the greater part, composed of the most poverty-stricken, ignorant and degraded, of a very low type of intellectual and moral development.

So lately as 1849, one of these ghouls was discovered in Paris. He was a French officer named Bertrand. Delicate and refined in

appearance, he was beloved by his comrades for his generous and cheerful qualities. He was, however, of retiring habits, and occasionally subject to fits of depression; but no one had any idea of his ghoulish propensities till they were brought to light.

In the autumn of 1848 several of the cemeteries in the neighbourhood of Paris were found to have been entered during the night, and some of the graves rifled.

It was at first supposed that wild beasts were the perpetrators of these outrages; but footprints in the soft earth showed that it was a man.

Close watch was kept in Père la Chaise, and the outrages there ceased. But in the following winter other cemeteries were ravaged.

It was not until the March of 1849 that the depredator was discovered by means of a spring gun, which had been set in the cemetery of St. Parnasse. One night it went off, and the watchers rushed to the spot, just in time to see a dark figure in a military cloak leap over the wall and disappear in the darkness, but not without leaving traces behind; there were marks of blood and a fragment of blue cloth, and these were the means of bringing the guilt home to Bertrand.

He was an officer in the 1st Infantry regiment; and when he was cured of his wound, he was tried by court-martial, and sentenced to a year's imprisonment. He said that the madness suddenly came upon him one day when, walking in a cemetery, he saw a grave not yet filled in, and a spade near at hand. He soon dragged the corpse out and hacked it about with the spade. After this he visited the cemeteries at night, and dug up various corpses, principally women and little girls, and mutilated them in a horrible manner, some he chopped up with the spade, others he ripped and tore with his teeth and nails, rending the flesh from the bones. Sometimes he tore the mouth open, and rent the face back to the ears; he opened the stomachs, pulled off the limbs, and scattering the pieces around, rolled among the fragments. He used to dig up the bodies of men also, but never felt any inclination to mutilate them; it was female corpses he used to delight in rending.

It was excess in drinking that first brought on this horrible madness, and after these accesses of diabolical ghoulishness he would fall into fits of utter exhaustion and helplessness, when, after crawling to some place of concealment he would lie prone on the ground

for hours, no matter what the weather might be, unable to stir or rise. It is not stated whether he went on with his ghoul's work after he was liberated from the year's imprisonment to which he was sentenced.

Bertrand's case shows how the brute still underlies the polish of civilization. He was not accounted mad, yet these fits of cannibalism must have been due to some form of insanity, and he seemed totally unable to control his dreadful appetite.

Somehow, much more horrible interest appears to centre on these nineteenth-century miscreants, such as Bertrand and Swiatek, than on those of former and remoter ages. There might have been exaggeration and mis-statements about the ancient men-beasts, but there could be none about their modern prototypes.

Ghouls and vampires have some connection with lycanthropists, for they were supposed in the daytime to be able to turn themselves into wolves or hyenas, while on moonlight nights they would steal among the tombs, and burrowing into them with their long nails, they disinterred the bodies of the dead ere the first streak of dawn compelled them to retire from their unhallowed feast.

To such an extent did the fear of ghouls extend in Brittany, that it was customary to keep lamps burning during the night in churchyards, so that the witches might be deterred from venturing, under cover of darkness, to violate the graves. It was supposed that troops of female ghouls used to appear upon battlefields unearthing the hastily buried bodies of the soldiers and devouring the flesh off their bones.

That the belief in vampires is not extinct in the present day, the following, which appeared in the *Standard* of May 11th, 1893, will show. "Eleven peasants in the Polish village of Muszina, in Galicia, actuated by a superstition that the recent frosts were the work of a vampire which had entered into an old man who had lately been buried, opened the grave, beheaded the body, and pierced the heart with a stake. They were all arrested."

There was a very ghastly idea in Normandy, that the *loup-garou* was sometimes a metamorphosis forced upon the body of a damned person, who, after being tormented in his grave, worked his way out of it. It was supposed that he first devoured the cerecloth which enveloped his face, then his moans and muffled howls rang from the tomb through the gloom of night, the earth of the grave began to

heave, and at last, having torn his way up, with a scream, surrounded by a phosphorescent glare, and exhaling a foetid odour, he burst away as a wolf.

Sometimes the transformed was supposed to be a white dog that haunted churchyards. With regard to this latter superstition, at this day in some country places in England, the farmers hold white animals to be unlucky, and will not choose white horses, cats or dogs, and consider it an omen of misfortune if they come across a white hare or rabbit. Some two or three years ago the writer was in Devonshire, and near the place where he took up his temporary abode was a very picturesque-looking churchyard. One moonlight evening, all unconscious of there being anything unusual in it, he announced his intention of sitting there for an hour or so before turning in, there being a magnificent view over a long stretch of sea, the church being built on the edge of the cliff. The landlady, a prosaic enough looking old woman, one would think, threw up her hands in protestation.

"You surely wouldn't do anything so rash, sir," she said.

"Why not?"

"Because," and she lowered her voice to an awed whisper, "it's haunted."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, sir; it's haunted by the ghost of——"

Oh! shades of wehr-wolves, louns-garoux, bear-men or other ferocious creatures, shiver in your graves and hide your diminished heads before the terrible monster the landlady's imagination conjured up. This evil thing that had the power to work untold harm was nothing more nor less than the ghost of a "white rabbit."

This was too much for the writer's risible nerves, and he disgusted the landlady, not only by a peal of laughter, but also by making a point of going every night during the remainder of his stay to the haunted churchyard. It is needless to add that the formidable ghost never gratified him by making its appearance.

The earliest mention of wehr-wolves is to be found among the traditions and in the mythology of the Scandinavians. The wolf is frequently mentioned in the Edda. There is Fenris, the offspring of Loki, the Evil Principle, an enormous and appalling wolf. The ancient Scandinavians believed that he will continue to cause great mischief to humanity until the Last Day, when, after a fearful com-

bat, he will devour Odin ; not content with this, he will devour the sun, but will in his turn, be killed by Vidar.

There are also two wolves, one of which pursues the sun, and the other the moon, and one day both these orbs will be caught and devoured by them ; probably one of these is confounded with Fenris, for two wolves would scarcely devour one sun, unless they divided it in halves.

Of the origin of these wolves the Edda tells that "a hag dwells in a wood to the east of Midgard, this is called J'arnvid, or the Iron Wood, and is the abode of a race of witches called J'arnvidjur.

This old hag is the mother of many gigantic sons, who are all of them wolf-shaped. The most formidable of these is named Mána-garm ; he will be filled with the life-blood of men who draw near their end, and will swallow up the moon, and stain the heavens and the earth with blood. Then shall the sun grow dim (preparatory to being devoured) and the winds howl tumultuously to and fro. The snow will fall from the four corners of the world. The stars will vanish from the heavens. The tottering mountains will crumble to pieces ; the sea will rush upon the land ; and the great serpent, advancing to the shore will inundate the air and water with floods of venom. Then will follow "the twilight of the Gods"—the end of the world.

It may not be out of place here to mention that that apocryphal monster, the dragon, was by many affirmed to be the offspring of an eagle and a she-wolf. An old writer declared that "the dragon had the beake and wings of an eagle, a serpente's taile, the feete of a wolfe, and a skin speckled and partie-coloured like a serpente." He adds the following extraordinary statement, "Neither can it *open the eyelids*, and it liveth in caves."

Olaus Magnus, Archbishop of Upsal, and Metropolitan of Sweden in the sixteenth century, wrote a great deal on the subject of wehr-wolves. He relates, that in the northern parts, at Christmas, there is a great gathering of these men-wolves, who, during the night, rage with such fierceness against mankind, for they are much more savage than natural wolves, that the inhabitants suffer infinite miseries. They attack houses, break open doors, destroy the inmates, and going to the cellars, drink amazing quantities of ale and mead, leaving the empty barrels heaped one on another. Somewhere in those wild northern regions, there was once a wall, belonging to a castle which had been destroyed ; and here the wehr-wolves were

wont to assemble at a given time and exercise themselves in trying to leap over the wall. The fat ones that could not succeed were flogged by their captains. Olaus asserts that great men and members of the chief nobility of the land belonged to this singular confraternity. The change was effected by mumbling certain words and drinking a cup of ale to a man-wolf. It was necessary that the transformation should take place in some secret cellar or private wood, and the wehr-wolves could change to and fro as often as they pleased. It was not always, however, that the man-wolf could change his shape in time to save his life.

There is a story told of a Russian Archduke, who seized a sorcerer, named Lycaon (perhaps a descendant of the Arcadian king), and commanded him to change himself into a wolf. The enchanter obeyed; not thinking of treachery, he crouched down, muttering incantations, and straightway became a wolf, with glaring eyes, grinning jaws, and raging so fearfully that the keepers could scarcely hold him. By way of having a little sport, the Archduke set two ferocious hounds upon him, and the unfortunate Lycaon was torn to pieces before he could resume his human form.

Some of the lycanthropists felt no uneasiness during the change, but others were afflicted with great pain and horror, while the hair was breaking out of their skin even before they were thoroughly changed.

Some could change themselves whenever they wished, others were transformed twice a year, at Christmas and Midsummer, at which times they grew savage, and were seized with a desire to converse with wolves in the woods. Many of these wehr-wolves bore marks of wounds and scars on their faces and bodies which had been inflicted on them by dogs or men when in their lupine form.

Wehr-wolves were distinguished from natural wolves by having no tails, and by their eyes; for these latter never changed, they were always human. The salve, which in some places was supposed to work the change, was composed of gruesome ingredients, in which the fat of newly-born strangled infants, the marrow of malefactors collected at the foot of the gibbet, the blood of bats, toads and owls, the grease of sows, wolves and weasels, mixed with belladonna, aconite, parsley, poppy, hemlock, combined with various other noxious ingredients, and must have formed a delectable compound.

That lycanthropy was known as a disease is evident, from some

of the old writers speaking of it : " The infected," says one of them, " imitate wolves, and think themselves such, leaping out of their beds and running wild about the fields at night, worrying the flocks, and snarling like a dog. They lurk about the sepulchres by day with pale looks, hollow eyes, thirsty tongues, and exulcerated bodies. They have a black, ugly and fearful look."

It is supposed that Nebuchadnezzar was attacked with this kind of madness when he grovelled about on all fours and ate grass like the beasts.

So late as the reign of James the First, an Englishman, Bishop Hall, travelling in Germany, related that he went through a certain wood that was haunted, not only by freebooters, but by wolves and witches (although these last are oft-times but one). He saw there a boy, half of whose face had been devoured by a witch-wolf, yet so as that the ear was rather cut than bitten off.

At Limburgh the Bishop saw one of these creatures executed; the wretched woman was put on the wheel, and confessed in her tortures that she had devoured two-and-forty children in her wolf-form.

Other authorities state that wehr-wolves were always at enmity with witches. There is a tale told of a countryman who put up at the house of a jovial bailiff, drank too much, and was left to have his sleep out on the floor. The next morning, a horse was found dead in the paddock, cut in two with a scythe. In answer to questions, the guest admitted that he was a wehr-wolf, and that he had hunted a witch about the field. She had taken refuge under the horse, and in aiming at her he had unintentionally divided the animal in halves.

PART II.

MANY are the stories related of wehr-wolves; but they differ somewhat according to the locality from which they come. Thus, there are many versions of the following.

A nobleman was travelling with his retainers; and one night they found themselves in a thick wood, far from all human habitations. They were hungry, for they had no provisions with them and did not know what to do. One of the servants, however, told them not to be surprised at anything that might happen. He then went into

a dark part of the forest, and presently a wolf was seen to run past, and soon came back with a sheep it had slain, which the company were very grateful for. Then the wolf went to the dark spot, and the servant emerged from there in his proper shape. He was a wehr-wolf.

Another account says that it was a slave who turned himself into a wolf, but unfortunately the dogs set upon him and tore out one of his eyes, so that afterwards he was blind of one eye.

Again, a tale says it was a gentleman who transformed himself because a lady wished to see the change, and lost his eye in consequence.

There are numerous instances of wolves having been wounded, and the next day human beings being found wounded in exactly the same place, thus clearly demonstrating the fact that they were wehr-wolves.

In one case a nobleman had a beautiful wife; whether he had tired of her is not stated, but the sequel looks like it, and that he took this means of getting rid of her. A friend came to stay at the castle, who went out hunting. On his return he informed the nobleman that a huge wolf had attacked him, but that he had succeeded in cutting off one of its forepaws which he brought home with him. On taking it out of the cloth in which he had wrapped it, he was horrified to see, not a wolf's paw, but a delicate white hand, having jewels on the fingers. The nobleman instantly recognised the rings as his wife's. Going to her room he found her looking very ill and carefully keeping her right hand covered up. Insisting on seeing it, he soon discovered the bleeding wrist, and knew for certain that his wife was a wehr-wolf. This unfortunate lady was tried and executed, falling a victim to her husband's dislike.

In one version, a man going home in the dark was attacked by a wolf, but managed to cut off a paw, which, on reaching his house, he found was a human hand. In a day or two he discovered that a young man of his acquaintance had lost his right hand that very night, which was proof-positive that he was the wehr-wolf who had attacked him.

There is a story related that a nobleman travelling with his servants in some part of France came upon an old beggar-man who was toiling along under a heavy wallet. One of the servants good naturedly offered to carry it, an offer which was accepted. The man felt

curious to know what was in the bag, and opening it saw a wolf skin. A desire to put it on came over him, and doing so, he was instantly transformed into a wolf, and rushed about snarling and howling, and trying to attack everyone near him. The dogs had to be set on him, and he only succeeded in getting out of the wolf skin with his life, having received several wounds from the dogs. This man averred that the nature of a wolf seemed to come upon him with its skin, and he had a desire to rend anyone he could seize. Of course they looked at once for the original owner of the skin, the beggar, but the old loup-garou had disappeared and never came to claim his property.

In different countries these metamorphoses were effected by different means. A Swedish tradition relates that a cottager named Lasse, having gone into the forest to fell a tree, neglected to cross himself and say his Paternoster. By this neglect a troll was enabled to change him into a wolf. His wife, who mourned his loss for many years, was told by a beggar-woman, to whom she had been kind, that she would see her husband again as he was not dead, but roaming the forest as a wolf. That very evening, as she was in her pantry putting away a joint of meat, a wolf put its paws on the window-sill, and looked sorrowfully at her. "Ah!" said she, "if I knew that thou wert my husband, I would give thee this meat." At that instant the wolf skin fell off, and her husband stood before her in the same old clothes which he had on on the day of his disappearance.

In parts of Germany, those who wished to become wehr-wolves, obtained the power by drinking a nauseous draught from the hands of one already initiated.

In France, usually, the change was made by rubbing with some unguent, generally of demoniacal origin. Others asserted that wolf skins given them by devils, had the quality of transforming those who put them on into ferocious animals themselves.

Mostly the loup-garou was able to re-transform himself back into his human shape at his own will by such expedients as plunging into water, rolling over and over in the dew, or resuming his clothes, which were usually hidden in some thicket while the wehr-wolves were on their runs; but there were cases where the victims were unable to escape from their lupine form for periods ranging from a month to seven years. These were generally victims of the hatred

of relatives who took this method of punishing those who were obnoxious to them.

It was said that jilted mistresses and deserted wives used to bribe witches to turn their faithless swains or husbands into wolves for the term of seven years. These wolves, however, were not credited with a taste for human flesh.

Some of those who were executed as lycanthropists, declared in their confessions, that no sooner had they put on the wolf-skin received from a demon, than their whole nature seemed to change. Their teeth felt on edge to bite and rend, the bloodthirst awoke in them, and they would dart forth from hut or brake or thicket, wherever, in fact, the metamorphoses had taken place, and traverse meadows, forests, plains and marshes, howling in a frightful manner until they met a victim, when they would rend him with teeth and claws, preparatory to making a meal of him. In great fear were these wehr-wolves held, and terrible tales were told of them and the bloody scenes and unhallowed deeds that were supposed to be enacted in their nocturnal haunts.

Real wolves in severe winters have been known to come into villages and kill children, and cases have been heard of, when terribly pressed by hunger, their invading burial grounds, and disinterring the dead, and occasionally, perhaps, their depredations have been put down wrongfully to some unfortunate being suspected of being a loup-garou; but unfortunately there was only too much truth in the stories told of some of these human wolves and their propensities for cannibalism.

These insane creatures actually believed that they turned into wolves, though no trustworthy person had ever seen the transformation. Some of them ran about on all-fours, and devoured with eagerness any offal that came in their way.

As with witchcraft, so with lycanthropy.

When the persecution against wehr-wolves was disconnected and fitful, isolated cases only were heard of; but when, towards the end of the sixteenth century, something like a crusade was preached, and priestly anathemas were hurled against it, lycanthropy alarmingly increased. Nothing else being talked about, hundreds of weak heads were turned, silly persons accused themselves of the crime and attempted to play wolf, though somehow or other they could never manage the transformation to the satisfaction of their neighbours.

Not to be done however, some of them got over this difficulty by asserting that they *wore their bristles inside their skin*.

The folly and ignorance of our ancestors in those days must have been prodigious. Look at the scientific treatises they wrote to prove witchcraft true, and now this palpable lie took in these same learned persons, and a very animated discussion ensued upon the why and the wherefore of this extraordinary fact. The *savants*, with their usual discernment propounded a great many ingenious theories to account for so remarkable a circumstance, theories which satisfied everybody, except those who had counter-theories of their own. It must have been an edifying sight, these grave and reverend *seignors*, explaining to their own and everybody else's satisfaction how it was that the bristles of the invisible wolf-pelts could be worn under the human skin.

In 1598, a tailor of Chalons was sentenced to be burned alive for lycanthropy. He used to decoy children into his shop, or waylay them in the woods at dusk. After tearing them with his teeth and killing them, he dressed their flesh like ordinary meat, and devoured it with great relish. A cask full of bones was found in his house, but the number of his victims is unknown.

Peter Bourgot, a shepherd of Besançon, having lost his sheep in a storm, recovered them by the aid of the devil, whom he agreed to serve, and was transformed into a wolf by being smeared with a salve. He confessed that he had often killed and eaten children and even grown persons. On one of his raids, a boy whom he attacked screamed so loudly that he was obliged to return to his clothes, and smear himself again in order to escape detection.

One Roulet was a wretched beggar, whose idiotic mind was completely mastered by his cannibal appetite. The first knowledge of his depraved taste was obtained by some countrymen, who, while passing a wild and lonely spot near Caude, found the mutilated corpse of a boy of fifteen. On their approach, two wolves which had been rending the body ran off. Following their tracks, the men came upon a half-naked man crouching in the bushes. His hair and beard were long and straggling, and his nails, which were the length of claws, were clotted with blood and shreds of human flesh. Roulet acknowledged that he had killed the boy, and would have devoured the body completely had it not been for the arrival of the men. He said, at his trial, that he transformed himself into a wolf by

using an ointment his parents had given him ; and added, that the wolves that had been seen leaving the corpse were his brother and cousin. There is no doubt this man killed and eat several children, under the belief that he was a wolf. He was sentenced to death, but afterwards placed in a madhouse.

Another lycanthropist, Jacques Raollet, was a native of Maumusson, near Nantes. His hair floated over his shoulders like a mane, his eyes were buried in his head, his brows knit, his nails excessively long, and he smelt so strong that nobody cared to go near him. This wehr-wolf had a propensity for which a good many persons, instead of finding fault with him, would applaud him in the present day ; he confessed that it was a frequent custom of his to devour lawyers, bailiffs and others of the same sort, though he avowed that their flesh was so tough that he could never digest it.

Raollet was captured by the aid of dogs. During his examination he asked a gentleman who was present if he did not remember once to have discharged his arquebuss at three wolves.

The gentleman, a noted sportsman, admitted that he had done so, upon which Raollet declared that he was one of those wolves, and if they had not been put to flight by the peppering they had received on that occasion they would have devoured a woman who was working in a field close by. He was condemned to death by the Parliament of Angers and was burned at the stake.

Though wolves were the principal animals into which men were supposed to be transformed, there were stories of other metamorphoses into bears, cats and hares. According to one tale a man was cleaving wood in his courtyard, when he was suddenly attacked by three very large and ferocious cats. He defended himself by his prayers and his axe, and finally drove off the animals, who were considerably the worse for the combat. What was the man's astonishment shortly afterwards to be hauled before a magistrate on the charge of grievously wounding three honourable matrons. The ferocious cats were ladies of high rank, the affair was hushed up, and the man was dismissed under a strict injunction to secrecy on forfeit of his life.

In 1661, in Poland, in the forest of Lithuania, some huntsmen perceived a great many bears together, and in the midst of them two of small size, which exhibited some affinity to the human shape. Their curiosity excited, the men with considerable difficulty, for the

creature defended itself with its teeth and claws, managed to capture one of these small bears. It ran about on all fours, the skin and hair were white, the limbs well proportioned and strong, the visage fair and the eyes blue, but the creature could not speak, and its inclinations were altogether brutish. It appeared to be about nine years old. This bear-child was shown to the king and queen. It was christened by an archbishop in the name of Joseph Ursin, the Queen of Poland standing godmother, and the French Ambassador, godfather. Attempts were made to tame Joseph, but with not much success. He could not be taught to speak, though there was no apparent defect in his tongue; nor could he be induced to throw aside his fierceness, or to wear clothes or shoes, or anything on his head; however, he learned to walk upright on his feet and go where he was bidden. He liked raw flesh. Sometimes he would steal to the woods and there suck the sap from the trees after he had torn off the bark with his nails.

One day it was observed that he being in a wood when a bear had killed two men, that ferocious beast came to him, and instead of harming him, fondled him and licked his face and body.

Whether this creature was really a human child stolen by bears in its infancy, is not stated, nor what eventually became of him.

There have been accounts too, but whether trustworthy or not, it is impossible to say, of baboons carrying off children and bringing them up with their own young, and these children grew up with all the characteristics of their baboon foster parents save that their skins were not hairy. When found and taken back to their rightful place among men, they pined, were miserable, and seized the first opportunity of returning to the haunts of the wild men of the woods whose natures seemed to be in affinity with their own.

It is also said that Romulus and Remus have had modern counterparts. A case occurred in Oude not many years ago.

This story is vouched for as being absolutely true. It was somewhere about 1840 that a child of eighteen months old was missed by its parents. It was supposed that wolves had devoured it. About seven years after a man shooting in the jungle saw a she-wolf with several cubs, one of these had the appearance of a boy running about on all fours. With considerable difficulty he captured it, for the she-wolf showed fight. The animal snarled and growled like a wolf, and tried to bite its captor. It was exhibited at Lucknow and

caused considerable sensation. It was eventually handed over to one of the authorities (an English officer) who had a cage made for it, as it was dangerous to let it loose. None doubted that it was a human being, though it never stood erect, or uttered any sound save a growl or hoarse bark. It would only eat raw flesh, and when clothes were made for it, it tore them to pieces. A rank wolfish smell issued from the pores of its skin, which was covered with thin short hair. Among the crowds who came to see the monster was the woman who had lost the child seven years before. To her horror she discovered by certain marks upon it that it was her own missing offspring. Every effort was made to tame him but without effect. He pined away and died in about a year after his capture.

In 1849 at the little hamlet of Polomyja, in Austrian Galicia, a white-bearded venerable man might have been seen sitting at the porch of a church asking alms of the poor wood-cutters who made up the population. This beggar, whose name was Swiatek, eked out his subsistence by the charity of the villagers and the sale of small pinchbeck ornaments and beads. Several children disappeared about this time, but nobody connected their disappearance with the venerable looking Swiatek, and as the wolves happened to be particularly ravenous that winter, it was supposed they had eaten them, and the exasperated villagers killed several. But a horrible discovery was made in the following May. An innkeeper lost two ducks and suspected Swiatek of being the thief. To satisfy himself he went to the beggar's cottage. The smell of roasted meat which greeted his nostrils when he entered confirmed his suspicions. As he threw open the door he saw the beggar hide something under his long robe. The innkeeper at once seized Swiatek by the throat and charged him with the theft, when, to his horror, he saw the head of a girl of fourteen drop from beneath the pauper's clothes.

He called the neighbours, and the old beggar, his wife, his daughter aged sixteen, and his son, aged five, were locked up. The hut was then thoroughly examined, and the mutilated remains of the poor girl were discovered, part being cooked. At his trial Swiatek stated that he and his family had eaten six persons. His children, however, declared that the number was much larger, and this testimony was confirmed by the discovery in the hut of fourteen different suits of clothes. For three years Swiatek had been indulging in this horrible propensity, which had suddenly sprung into existence

by the following circumstance :—In 1846 he found amid the charred ruins of a Jewish tavern, the half-roasted corpse of its proprietor, who had perished in the flames. The half-starved beggar could not resist the desire to taste it, and having done so, the unnatural craving impelled him to gratify his depraved appetite by murder. The indignation against him was so great that he would have been torn in pieces by the populace only he anticipated their vengeance by hanging himself the first night of his confinement from the bars of the prison-window.

There is a romantic Breton story of a nobleman who used to transform himself.

His wife discovered his secret, and possessed herself of his clothes while he was in the lupine state, thus preventing him from returning to his proper form. She then married a lover, and Bisclavaret lurked miserably in woods, longing in vain to shake off the brutish semblance that imprisoned him.

The king hunting one day pursued the man-wolf, and at last ran him down. He was about to kill the animal, when it seized his stirrup and appeared to implore his protection.

The king, greatly astonished, had him taken to court, where he became a great favourite, his manners were so gentle and dog-like.

But one day his faithless wife's husband came to court, when Bisclavaret jumped savagely upon him and nearly killed him before he could be rescued by the attendants. Again the same thing happened, but on the faithless dame herself appearing Bisclavaret seized upon her and tore her nose from her face.

This incensed the king greatly, and he would have put the wolf to death, when an aged counsellor perceiving some mystery, advised that the lady and the knight should be imprisoned until the truth should be extorted from them.

This was done and Bisclavaret's clothes being restored to him, he became a comely gentleman, who was taken into high favour. The wicked wife and her companion were banished from the land.

Instances might be multiplied by the score, but enough has been said to show that while wehr-wolves were a myth built up by superstition, Lycanthropy, or wolf-madness was no myth, but a dread and appalling reality.

The Adventures of a Novel.

By GEORGE LAMBERT.

Author of "THE POWER OF GOLD," etc., etc.

I AM a "poure persone of a toune," and that in one particular, in the sense intended by Chaucer; for my "town"—as the villagers call the agglomeration of tumble-down cottages which surrounds our church—is only a village after all, and a dirty and evil-smelling village to boot. And as I come up to the old poet's description in this one particular, I certainly answer to that description in the other, for I am poor indeed. The all-devouring monster, Agricultural Depression, has got me in a tight and most uncomfortable grip; and how, in the face of a steadily falling tithe, to maintain myself and the hostages I have given to fortune in the pleasing shapes of a wife and several olive-branches, this is, indeed, a problem not easy of solution.

Things had been going on from bad to worse with us for some time, and the future was looking very dark indeed, when, one winter evening as we were sitting together by the fire, a way out of our difficulties—a very forlorn hope, as I thought—occurred to my wife.

"If you could only do something to earn a little money;" she said with a sigh, "do you know," she went on after a pause, and with some hesitation, "I have been thinking—now, don't cry out at me!—why should not you write a novel?"

"I!" I exclaimed in much astonishment, "I write a book, a novel? Why, what on earth——?"

"Yes, why should you not? Look at the enormous sums Anthony Trollope and Mr. Payn have made—in those books of theirs you have been reading to me, I mean——"

"My dear," said I, with a grim smile, "I am afraid there is not much of the Trollope or Payn in *me*."

"Nonsense, Edward," said, she, "I am sure your sermons are beautiful; there is an easy flow of words in them——"

"Which effectually sends the farmers to sleep every Sunday, as I can both see and hear; it is one thing to be able to write a decent sermon, but it is quite another thing to be able to write a novel."

But my wife was not to be convinced that her husband was not a heaven-born genius. When once she has got an idea into her head it is a difficult matter to get that idea out again, and, in short—so eager was she—the very next day I was seated in my study, with due provision of pen, ink and paper, the door was softly shut by my wife, I heard her enjoining the strictest of quiet upon the tribe of infants, who were soon banished to a remote part of the gardens, and a solemn silence settled down upon the house. And thus it was that my first novel—whose adventures I propose to relate—had its birth. Of the throes and agonies I went through in seeking for inspiration I will say nothing; it is enough to say that a few days of mental exercise, of a somewhat severe order, in sooth, left me with some sort of a plot sketched out in a fair handwriting upon a sheet of foolscap—ominous name!—and with this before me as a guide, and grim necessity as a sharp enough spur, I buckled-to and wrestled with my task. At first the wheels of my chariot drove somewhat heavily, and showed a painful aptitude for sticking in the mud; time after time I made up my mind to leave it alone, for the thing seemed impossible; but my dear wife encouraged me with—too partial, I fear—praise, and I put my shoulder to the wheel and heaved the cumbersome machine again and again, under her cheering auspices, out of various deep and apparently hopeless ruts. As time went on I became more and more engrossed in my task—*task*, do I call it?—it soon became a keen pleasure to me; I was interested in my characters, and the story seemed to flow on with a smoothness which I trusted was not to have the somnolent effect of my Sunday discourses. I now looked forward with pleasant anticipation to the quiet evening hour when, night after night, ensconced in a comfortable chair, and with an extra candle at my elbow, I declaimed the periods, and the conversations, the fruits of the day's penning.

At last the book was finished, and, encouraged by my wife's enthusiastic appreciation, one winter's morning I set out, high in hopes, for London, there to dispose—as I fondly hoped—of my precious MSS., and thence to return with a handsome peculium, and all its attendant comforts, and easements. I have a brother, a fairly prosperous solicitor in London, and that night saw me in his warm and well-lighted dining-room; the ladies of his family had left us, and we had drawn up our chairs to the fire.

“Glad to see you old man,” said he, nodding to me, and taking a

sip from his glass of Port, "fill up your glass. And what brings *you* to London Town?"

"Well," said I with the ingenuous blush of the neophyte, "the fact is, I have written a novel, and——"

"*You*! written a novel! Good Heavens!" was the not very encouraging reception my item of intelligence met with; then seeing, I suppose, the hurt look on my face, "I beg your pardon, Ted," he said, "and upon my word, I don't see why you should *not* write a novel. What is it all about, eh? What's the title of it?"

"It is called '*Amery's Cot*,' and it is a—well, I hardly know how to describe it exactly—a country tale, don't you know; it would take some time to tell you the plot, but——"

"Oh, never mind, old fellow," interrupted my brother with a suspicious hastiness, "a regular three-volumer; introduction in the first, death and despair in the second, and live happy ever after in the third volume, eh?" and he laughed as he spoke. I confess I was somewhat annoyed at the flippant way in which he treated the result of my labours, but, to tell the truth, his words did, in a certain measure, describe the book, so I simply nodded.

"And you have come up to get rid of it I suppose?" he went on, "not a very easy process, Ted. Mind, I am not saying anything against your book; but there are so many in the field, market's glutted, you know. Still, I think I can give you a helping hand; for, luckily, one of our big publishers is a client of mine, and I will give you a letter of introduction to him."

This was a piece of good fortune I had not expected, and I warmly thanked my brother for his kindness.

The next morning, armed with minute directions from my brother, with his letter of introduction in my breast pocket, and the MSS. carefully, if rudely, bound by my wife, in a hand-bag, I was making my way towards St. Paul's, under whose shadow were the offices of my brother's clients, Messrs. A. and T. Smallbridge, Publishers. Having seen the name of the firm very frequently displayed upon volumes of divers sorts and kinds, and knowing from this frequency that they must be doing an enormous business, I, not unnaturally, imagined that the business must be transacted in some such palatial edifice as I had noticed on my way. I was disappointed, for Messrs. Smallbridge's establishment was a mean-looking house in a narrow, dark, and dirty court.

"Want to see the firm?" said a young man, with a putty-coloured face, fuzzy and disordered hair, and a general aspect of grime, to whom I gave my card, and my brother's letter, "I think Mr. Arthur is in, take a seat, please;" and he ran upstairs, leaving me to wait and look around me. This outer office was a large apartment, and, though it was broad daylight, was lighted with gas jets, for the narrowness of the court effectually kept out the light, and made this artificial illumination a necessity; the big chamber had a counter circling round it, and on this counter, and on shelves, chairs, and even on the stairs up which the clerk had sped, and on the very floor itself, were countless numbers of volumes of all sizes, shapes, and hues. I was thinking how much I should enjoy a rummage in such a literary treasure-house, when the putty-faced one came down the stairs at a run, and pointing upwards, "First floor, first door to the left," he said, and immediately turned to the counter, and began to sort out some books as if further comment were superfluous.

Taking his hint, I proceeded at a more decorous pace than his, to climb the stairs, and soon found myself opposite a door, half wood, and half ground glass, and with "Private" inscribed in large letters upon the upper and the glass half.

"Come in," said a muffled voice in answer to my modest knock; and I was soon seated in the dusty little den, with its scanty and dilapidated furnishings, where the great Mr. Arthur Smallbridge transacted his business affairs.

"Er — you want to consult me as to a — novel (looking at my brother's letter) Mr. Leadham; I shall be glad to give you any assistance in my power. What have you done?" he asked, throwing the letter on the table and settling himself in his chair.

"Done?" said I, in some astonishment.

"Published, I mean," he said, with a smile, "what have you written?"

"Oh, I understand," said I, "I have not published anything before."

"Then this is the first novel," said he; "I am afraid I cannot give you any very great encouragement, Mr. Leadham; there are so many new-comers in the market, and unless your book is of extraordinary merit, you will find it very difficult to get a publisher to undertake the risk, very difficult."

I suppose I must have looked rather downcast at this for his next remarks were a little more reassuring.

"All the same," he said, "you come to us with an excellent introduction, and we will do the best we can for you. I see," and here he smiled again, "you have the MSS. with you"—for indeed I had taken it out of the bag downstairs, and was holding the formidable package in my lap—"and if you will leave it with us, our reader shall look it over. As a rule we are obliged to keep the MSS. of unknown authors for some time, but we will put yours in hand at once; and if you will come to me at the end of the week—say on Saturday morning—I hope we shall be able to make you an offer. Good morning," and with that he took my precious MSS. from me, and bowed me out.

Never surely did a week pass so slowly, for although my relatives did their best to amuse me, I was always thinking of my book, and counting the hours until its fate should be decided one way or the other. However, at last the fateful Saturday came round, and though cheered with kindly good wishes, I made my way in a state of trembling anxiety to the now familiar offices of Messrs. A. and T. Smallbridge. Once more I mounted the stairs and found myself seated opposite the publisher.

"Well, Mr. Leadham," he said with a pleasant smile on his round and rubricund face, for he was a stout and tubby little man, and looked more like a cheesemonger than what was my idea a publisher should be, "we have had your book reported on, and I am glad to tell you our reader advises us to undertake it."

Here I experienced a joyful thrill. It was, however, a fleeting emotion, for his next sentences cast me down again, and filled me with dismay.

"You do not, of course," he went on, "expect to publish a first novel without having to take some share in the risk; our usual terms with beginners are a third share of the risks, and a third share of the profits, if any."

"What would the third of the expense amount to?" I asked with a sinking heart.

"We propose to publish your book in the two shilling form; there is not much chance for a three volume novel now, and the third share of the expense would come to about seventy-five pounds."

"Seventy-five pounds!" I exclaimed aghast, "then I am afraid my poor book will never appear in print, for I certainly cannot find such a large sum of money."

"Well, sir," said the publisher, though not unkindly, "that is, of course, for you to judge; if you have confidence in yourself, it is not a very large sum to risk, and I fear you will not get better terms."

"I am afraid it is hopeless," said I in despair.

"I should be glad to do anything to help you," he said, "those are our terms, but it is just possible you may find another firm more amenable. Shilston and Lawley are a young firm; very pushing man is Lawley, he was with us for years, and if you like I will give you a letter to him."

I expressed my warm thanks, and eagerly embraced his kind offer; and in a few minutes I was out in the streets again, on my way to Messrs. Shilston and Lawley's offices, which were not very far from Covent Garden.

Of course this opening of my eyes as to the value of so many month's hard labour was not a pleasant operation, and I was bitterly disappointed. Seventy-five pounds! Why seventy-five shillings would have been a risk I should have hesitated at. I had fondly imagined I should leave the Messrs. Smallbridge's premises with a comfortable cheque in my pocket-book, and here I was out in the street, hustled about by the busy populace, in a bewildered frame of mind, and with the now distasteful packet of MSS. under my arm. However, as I walked up Holborn, I gradually recovered my spirits; they had been willing to take the book, their experienced reader had approved of it, and that was something; and so, though not very light-heartedly, I confess, I made my way westwards, and soon found myself outside the offices of Messrs. Shilston and Lawley. A thin slice of a house it was, squeezed in between a large carriage depot and an eating-house.

"Yes," said the young man who came forward as I entered, and to whom I presented my letter and my card, "Mr. Lawley is in, I will see if he is disengaged."

"Mr. Lawley will see you, sir," he called out in a minute or two from the stairs, and again I mounted with my MSS. under my arm, and was ushered into the presence of that pushing and enterprising Mr. Lawley, a thin weedy-looking sort of a man, with close-clipped, ginger-coloured hair and whiskers, ferretty eyes, and a short sharp way with him.

"Well, sir," said he, pointing to a seat in his sanctum; a strong contrast this, by the way, to Mr. A. Smallbridge's domain; for

though tiny, the little room was well-furnished; a tasteful carpet covered the floor, the rosewood furniture was shining with newness, and there was a mirror over the mantelpiece, "Well, sir, what can we do for you?"

"I have written a novel, which I wish to——"

"Which you wish us to publish for you; so Mr. Smallbridge says. What have you done?"

I explained again that this was a first attempt.

"Hm!" he said, shaking his head, "I am afraid, unless it is extraordinarily good there is not much chance. What is it about?"

"The scene is laid in Devonshire——" I began.

"There has been a perfect avalanche of Devonshire stories lately," he said, "is it funny, humorous?"

"Well, yes, I think I may say it is," said I, "there is a certain flavour of humour in it."

"That is a good point at any rate," he said, "I can get any amount of sensation, and any amount of sentiment, but humour is rare, and humour *pays*. Well, sir, if you will leave your MSS. we will see what we can do for you. By the way you had better write your full address on the title-page."

"I am afraid, I have but a short time in London," I said, as I undid the package, and wrote my name and address as he directed, "I must be back in Devonshire on Saturday, and if you could let me know——"

"You want us to give you our decision by the end of next week," he exclaimed, and he laughed aloud, "why we have upwards of a hundred MSS. under consideration, and we should have to keep a hundred readers at that rate, and that, you know, would not *pay*," and again he laughed, somewhat rudely, I thought, "I can tell you our terms beforehand," he went on, "our terms for a first novel are half profits."

"And what should I have to pay?" I asked hesitatingly.

"Pay?" he continued, "we don't do business on commission, *we* take all risks."

"Oh, thank you," said I, much relieved, and, as he rose from his chair, and held out his hand, I took the hint, and leaving my MSS. on his table, I shook hands with him, and departed.

"Half the profits, and none of the risks," thought I, as I wended my way towards my brother's house in Bloomsbury, "why, that is

splendid!" and I fervently hoped that fortune would smile upon me and my "Amery's Cot," and that that humorous and entertaining novel would meet with the approval of Messrs. Shilston and Lawley, and appear in due time in their list of new novels.

"Well," said my brother that evening, summing up the result of my experiences as we sat over our wine after dinner, "I don't think you have done badly at all, Ted; it is something for Smallbridge to make you an offer, though I think the terms are rather stiff; it seems a lot of money—seventy-five pounds—I had no idea it cost so much to produce a yellow-back. Of course it was out of the question for you to risk so much money. The other fellow's offer is a much better one, and I am sure I hope he will take the book; here's good luck to it!" and he solemnly filled and nearly emptied a glass of wine, "and if they don't, you need not be downhearted, there must be something in the book or Smallbridges would not have looked at it, and there are plenty of other publishers, and you must go on trying till you succeed." A day or two afterwards I returned to my parish; I found my wife, to whom I had written almost daily, in quite a cheerful frame of mind; she took even a more rosy-coloured view of things than did my brother, and was quite convinced that Shilston and Lawley would publish "Amery's Cot," and that her husband was on the highway to fame and fortune as a successful novelist.

Urged on by her, I soon began another story, devoting my mornings to my literary work and my afternoons to my clerical duties; and this without defrauding my parish of its proper dues, for the population is small, and most of the people are of a peculiarly bitter order of dissenters, and prefer the parson's room to his company. The postman, whose daily visit we were of old time wont to regard with dislike and even fear, because of the unpleasant bills he so often brought us, was now looked for with eager expectation, for any day might bring us a communication from Messrs. Shilston and Lawley; but in vain did I, day after day, start up from the breakfast table and take the letters from him myself, for the weeks went on, and turned into months, and still there was no news of "Amery's Cot."

"Why don't you write to them, Edward?" said my wife at last.

"Not I, my dear," I answered, "you can have no idea of the independence of that kind of people; beggars must not be choosers, and if I were to write, the probabilities are I should get the book back by return of post without note or comment."

At last, and after two months and a half had passed by, the fateful epistle appeared in the morning's budget; I noted it at once, and with trembling hands tore open the cover. The letter was written in a sprawling hand, and ran as follows:—"We have had your novel, 'Amery's Cot,' read and reported on, and we are pleased to be able to inform you that our reader describes the story as being 'bright and interesting,'" Here I and my wife, who was standing beside me, and reading—with what excitement, poor soul!—with me, came to the end of the page, "Ah! Edward, I told you so," she exclaimed triumphantly; but alas! alas! her triumph was but shortlived, for this was what we found on the other side of the page—"but our list is already so heavy that we do not feel disposed to undertake it. The MSS. will be forwarded to you."

I will not paint the despair that horrid "but" brought to two hopeful souls, or the sorrowful disappointment which hailed the advent of the rejected MSS. the next day. I had not the heart to go on with the new venture I was engaged upon, and for some days I gloomily mooned about, unable to settle down to anything, and a prey to despair; it was also more than painful to me to see the evident efforts my poor wife made to appear cheerful under the bitter disappointment, and to hide the disappointment from that "stricken deer" her husband. However, time heals all, and in a few days I began to take a more cheerful view of things.

Smallbridges' reader had approved of the book, and here again was Shilston and Lawley's reader giving me a favourable report; as my brother said, there were plenty of other publishers untried, and the merits of "Amery's Cot" might yet appeal to an enlightened public. This time, however, I determined to send away the book without my wife's knowledge, for I could not bear to see her again going through the anxiety and suspense of the last two months. In a kind of despair I determined to aim high this venture, and I secretly despatched the MSS., with a commendatory letter, to those high and potent luminaries of the publishing world the Messrs. Billington.

Again week passed week, and not a word did I hear even to tell me that my package had reached that eminent firm safely; but I possessed my soul in patience, and settled down again to my now ordinary routine of literary and parochial work.

One morning, in about six weeks time, I received a blue letter with a great B on the flap of the envelope.

"Another bill, I suppose," said my wife, who was watching my letters. "Whose is it?" she asked with a sigh. But her sigh was soon turned to sounds of joyfulness, for Messrs. Billington expressed in the tersest of language their acceptance of "Amery's Cot;" they offered to take all risks and expenses and to give me an honorarium of fifty pounds when the sale should reach to five hundred copies.

Had I not interviewed the other firms to whom I had applied, and had not I met with the chastening disappointments of the last few months, I should probably have looked upon this offer as a very poor one indeed. But I knew something about the difficulty of getting one's "stuff" off now, and I hailed the missive and its cheering contents with the keenest joy. My book was to appear! that was already something; my long labours were not to be fruitless; and moreover the fifty pounds was, at any rate, a pleasing probability, which my ardent wife seized upon, and rapidly converted into a certainty. It was not long before the rolls of proof began to appear, and I shall not easily forget the pride with which I saw myself in print for the first time, a pride which, as will presently appear, was to have some very nasty falls.

Shortly after the blissful communication from Messrs. Billington, and my reply thereto, a stamped agreement was forwarded to me by which I conveyed my rights over the copyright of "Amery's Cot" to Messrs. Billington for the problematical fifty pounds; and a few weeks after I saw an advertisement in the "Daily Thunderer"—my paper—informing the public that a new novel, "Amery's Cot," in three vols., by E. Leadham, would shortly appear.

A fortnight later, and I received from my publishers six copies of the novel, and great was my and my wife's delight in the tasteful binding, and the clean, clear print of my first literary venture. But there is—so the pessimists say—no pleasure without its accompanying bitter after-taste; and so I found it when the notices of my novel began to appear in the daily and weekly papers. The first blow I experienced was the unkindest cut of all, inasmuch as it was delivered by mine own familiar friend, the "Daily Thunderer," the paper which had for years provided me with the news of the day, and to which I had cleaved with a fidelity it was now almost touching to look back upon.

"Amery's Cot," said the Reviewer, "is a shallow story with an entire absence of plot," and then after, oddly enough, giving a slight

resumé of the "absent" plot, he remarked that "if Mr. E. Leadham thinks he has hit upon an original vein in fiction, or is working an old mine in an original manner, he is in a state of blissful ignorance." I wished to bear my punishment, with what patience I might find, by myself; but my wife, who looks for the reversion of the paper in her brief leisure hour after our early dinner, is accustomed to read every line, and a paragraph cut out would have provoked comment, and suspicion on her part, if not confession on mine. Of course, then, she saw the short review, and very indignant was she at "the way I was treated" therein; to both of us it was a crushing blow; we thought—in our ignorance—the sale of the book would be stopped at once; and, I even, half looked for an indignant epistle from the Messrs. Billington, while the fifty pounds removed itself into the dim and distant vista of the improbable, if not of the impossible.

"After such a review as that," said I to my wife, with a doleful look at the grievous paragraph, "no other paper will look at 'Amery's Cot,' and it will, without doubt, die a natural death." I was mistaken, however, in this, and the mild reprobation of the "Daily Thunderer" was to be quite forgotten in a powerful counter-irritant applied to my tender feelings as an author by that celebrated weekly review the "Saturday Scarifier." My publishers, with a courtesy, which in this instance I would willingly have excused them, sent me the various notices as they appeared in the daily and weekly papers, and the "Scarifier's" gentle remarks came to me under the same cover with the "Thunderer's" review which I had already read, and painfully digested.

"Amery's Cot," said the "Scarifier," "exhibits no power in any direction which criticism can lay hold of, and then"—what odd people critics must be—he proceeded to criticise the book which criticism could not lay hold of. "It is neither good nor bad, but simply indifferent," said he, and then, after briefly describing the tale, "this is a most faded sort of fiction," he went on, "unlightened by humour, wit, or wisdom, as in the present case it is withered indeed." *As in the present case!* Oh Heavens! if the "Thunderer" was crushing, the "Scarifier" was absolutely pulverising; and I then and there determined that in trying novel-writing I had certainly mistaken my vocation, and that it was useless to attempt anything of *that* sort again. How fortunate I had not borrowed that seventy-five pounds Messrs. A. and T. Smallbridge had asked for as the third of

the cost of bringing out the book ! and how horribly angry Messrs. Billington must be at this awful fiasco ! *This* criticism I determined I would *not* show to the wife of my bosom ; firstly, because it would wound her deeply, and, secondly—well, I was not sure that it would increase the high estimation in which she held her husband, and any diminution in this regard would, of course, be inadvisable.

A week passed and my publishers made no sign, and the only thing which kept me from falling into utter despair was the fact that, in spite of these knock-down blows, the advertisement of my book still continued to figure somewhat prominently in the publishers column in the "Daily Thunderer," which seemed to show that Billingtons, at any rate, had not quite lost heart about it. About the middle of the next week another envelope addressed to me in the now dreaded hand of Messrs. Billington's manager, appeared at the Rectory, and I opened the missive with much trepidation, expecting to find within an indignant and scornful epistle conveying the publisher's disgust at the loss my literary venture had brought upon them. To my astonishment some strips of paper, which I dropped in my agitation, fell out, and as I picked them up, I saw, at once, that they, also, were notices of my book ; and with gloomy forebodings I prepared to receive a few more cutting lashes. But my forebodings were soon changed into keen delight, for the first notice I read was from the "Orbit of Literature," and was one of the most unequalled approval !

"A really good and healthy novel," said the critic, "an admirable story, well told, and to the point." Here was praise indeed ! as welcome as it was unlooked for, and a healing balm to the wounds, still bleeding, inflicted by the "Thunderer" and the "Scarifier." Moreover another slip contained the wise remarks of that learned organ of the literary world the "Acropolis," and these remarks, though occasionally severe,—as was no doubt right and well-deserved—were on the whole encouraging ; the reviewer ending his notice by saying that "the book was amusing." Our local organ also, to whose editor I had sent a copy of "Amery's Cot," gave me a kindly notice in which the public was informed that I "had the pen of a ready writer, and that my tale flowed smoothly on ;" while that well-known weekly paper, the "Instructor," after damning me with faint praise, was condescending enough to say that my novel was "readable." These encomiums, some mild enough, it must be

confessed, infused a small modicum of courage into me, and my wife's hopes of the golden honorarium began to revive, though I own that for my part I was not very clear on *that* point. Moreover, some curious speculations presented themselves to my mind; and, as I again read over the various reviews of my book, and noticed the extraordinary diversity of opinion displayed, I began to have some heretic doubts as to the infallibility of the much dreaded critics. For instance, in the very same column in the "Thunderer" in which the reviewer girded at me for my want of plot, and in a notice of a novel by a well-known author, he remarked that one of the most exalted qualities of the true novelist is to be "independent of plot," and he praised the popular writer for the very fault he condemned in me. And, again, "how," as I said to my wife, "can a story be at one and the same time 'unlightened by humour or wit,' as the 'Scarifier' describes 'Amery's Cot,' and 'amusing' as says the 'Acropolis' of the same tale?" "How can it be 'faded,' and 'shallow,' and 'wanting in originality,' and also be 'a really good novel,' 'an admirable story well told and to the point?' How can a book be 'withered indeed' as says the 'Scarifier,' and 'readable' as says the 'Instructor?' Moreover the 'Acropolis' had spoken in not too complimentary terms of my 'page-long periods, and attenuated truisms,' while that ever blessed 'Orbit' patted me on the back for my 'best gift in novel-writing which makes the characters tell their own tale, thereby avoiding—mark! the very self-same fault the 'Acropolis' accused me of—'long and tedious descriptions.' Who shall decide when doctors disagree? Verily the public who pays the critics to save itself the trouble of wading through the ever flowing stream of literature which now-a-days teems from the press, must sometimes be puzzled enough at the differing dicta of its oracles," thought I.

Several other notices of "Amery's Cot" appeared in the daily and weekly papers as time wore on, some exasperating—to the author at least—and some encouraging enough; and what was best of all, in due course I received a polite note from Messrs. Billington informing me they would be glad to consider any MSS. I might have in hand, and enclosing—pleasing sight!—a cheque for fifty pounds.

In a Cheval Glass.

A SKETCH.

By C. M. HAWKSFORD.

CHAPTER I.

AN IDEAL MARRIAGE.

"My dear Violet, believe me, it's far wiser to begin married life not expecting too much."

The speaker, Mrs. Fellowes, was a pretty woman, only just past her first youth. She and her companion, a young girl, were sitting in the dusk of the afternoon, over a fire, in a cosily furnished drawing-room in Chester Square.

"It's of no use saying that to me," the girl replied, lifting her lovely grey eyes to her friend's face. They were eyes full of dreams, of emotions, eyes that demanded so much. "I should never marry," she continued, "if I were not sure—quite sure, that it is possible for life to be a realization of belief—an idyl!"

Mrs. Fellowes slowly shook her head as she gave a little mirthless laugh.

"Possible, perhaps, but not probable. A woman generally begins married life by drawing unlimited cheques on what she firmly believes to be an inexhaustible bank; one day her cheque is dishonoured."

"Then?"

"Well, she ceases to draw them."

"But, Ella, if a woman is sure—quite sure before she marries, that the man she has chosen is worthy of her trust, that he is her soul's affinity—her——"

"Oh, I know all you would say; but it's jargon. A man is to be the woman's companion in thought as well as in act. They are to be exact complementaries, spiritually, and enjoy a conjugal felicity that is divine in its intensity, and eternal in its aspirations, two hearts so closely suited as to be able to read each other's thoughts and wishes, with an intuition that needs no words."

"Yes, Ella, that is what I mean."

"I believed that once."

"But, Ella, your married life has been so happy."

"Well—so called happiness is comparative, anyhow, a quality you can't weigh. I expect I am as happy as hundreds—as thousands of women, perhaps happier; but as I said before, don't expect marriage to fulfil a dream."

The girl slipped down from her seat on the fender, and rested her arms caressingly on Ella's lap.

"You hid it so well, Ella, that even I never guessed."

"There is not much to hide," Mrs. Fellowes said, with a hard ring in her voice. "It is such a common story. Jack is very good to me. He goes his way, I go mine. I don't believe that men and women ever want to go the same way, except when they are violently in love. When that fit is over they gradually drift apart, and it is very often so gradual they hardly realize it themselves. Married people should never look back, and never be introspective, Violet, dear. I see plainly, the mistake in your character is that you are introspective. If you don't look back, and don't look forward, and just take things as they come, trying to make the best of them, well, there is a good deal of enjoyment to be got out of life. In fact, I am not sure living at high pressure is enjoyment; it is too fatiguing."

Violet slowly shook her head. "Why should a woman marry at all, unless she gets something beyond what she has had before? Why should she give up her freedom, and accept responsibilities merely to become part of a man's household goods? If I did not believe in love, Ella, I could never marry."

"All—or nearly all women who marry young, begin, Violet, by believing in what you say. It's such a delightful delusion, imagining you are necessary to anyone's happiness. It colours everything with a rosy flush—it's only a flush. When that fades, the grey background is there, but for the time being you don't realize this. When I married, I firmly believed I was essential to Jack's happiness. For the first three months my faith remained unshaken."

"After that?"

"Well, after that," Mrs. Fellowes said, leaning her head back till it nestled among the cushions, and speaking as though she were talking to herself. "Oh, I can recall it all so well. Unfortunately women have the power of torturing themselves in a way no man

could understand. They can't forget things—they lacerate themselves. There are landmarks all along the road of married life, pointing to where the roads diverged. We went abroad for our honeymoon. During the first part of it we lived only for each other—the outside world did not exist. After' all, perhaps, one should not complain. It's a score to have known what happiness means. Numbers have never even had that experience. Women, I suppose, would be more capable of going on with the dream of love than men. Jack recovered first. I began to be aware he was gradually cooling off and getting bored."

"Ella, darling!"

"It is quite true. I did all I could not to believe it; but the fact was forced upon me. We had returned from abroad and were at Clovelly. It was our last afternoon there, that night we were to go to London. It was a lovely afternoon, and with my arm in Jack's, we were standing on a height overlooking the sea. By nature I am sentimental. I began talking of subjects—to theorise. My talks with Jack had hitherto been so delightful. He was so responsive, so appreciative. I waited for him to speak. 'Don't let's talk rubbish,' he said. 'Look here, Ella,' taking out his watch, 'if we mean to catch the express, recollect the train starts in half an hour, and our packing is not finished. I don't want to lose the express, we have had enough of Clovelly.' The blow had fallen. To a listener, this incident may seem such a mere trifle; but it's trifles that make up the sum of life. And for me it meant so much. It was the beginning of the end."

"But, Ella, that hardly meant he did not love you."

"Some love, Violet, is silver, and hall-marked; other is only electro-plated; if the silver is on a foundation of copper, it does duty for silver, and is often mistaken for it. Ours was on copper. Love ought to be printed on a good washing material to stand the wear and tear—the small worries of daily life—of daily jars. Jack and I get on delightfully. He is very busy all day. I have my friends—he has his. We go out of town from Saturday till Monday, and we never talk of our feelings; Jack would be far more put out by finding a button was missing from his shirt, than by knowing I was fretting my soul out because of his indifference."

"Oh, Ella," Violet said, "I can't bear to hear you talk like that. It must be a mistake. Jack always seems so fond of you."

"Yes—so he is—in a way—but not the way I intended."

"I understand," Violet said softly, and she let her head rest on Mrs. Fellowes' knees. "I understand you perfectly. If I thought Arthur's love for me was not something higher than mere personal attraction, I should consider our marriage sacrilege. If I thought he had ever loved anyone before, as he loves me; if I thought, when I was his wife, he would cease to love me, or be unfaithful to me, I should——"

"You would learn to accept the inevitable," Mrs Fellowes said decisively. "Violet," she continued, letting her hands wander over the waving yellow hair of the girl, "possession, to most men, means satiety. I am so afraid for your future. It makes my heart ache to hear what you expect, because I know you will be disappointed. It would be so much wiser, safer—safer to face life as it is—not as we wish it to be."

"You won't convince me, Ella. Repeat all you have now been saying to me some years hence, and then see what you will hear. I shall say, Ella, you were wrong, and you will read the security of my happiness written on my face."

"God grant I may be wrong, and you right," Mrs. Fellowes said with a sigh, "but remember, life is terribly practical, and human love very ethereal. It is like the dust on a butterfly's wing, a rough touch and it is destroyed. Nothing can ever restore it, but all the same, life has to be lived—only on a lower level."

Violet rose from her knees and stood erect. "I could not bear that," she said with repressed passion in her voice. "If that time ever came I should break my heart—I should—destroy myself."

"Many women have said the same thing, Violet; but most of them have to be satisfied with a broken heart, suicide is not so easy."

"What nonsense I have been talking," Violet said in a spirit of reaction. "If Arthur had only overheard me, I wonder what he would have said?"

* * * *

A few weeks after this conversation had taken place there was a fashionable marriage at St. Peter's Church, Eaton Square. The organ was breathing out soft notes from Lohengrin. When the bride, leaning on her father's arm, came up the aisle, her eyes were cast down, and her face was very serious, for to Violet, marriage was the holiest of sacraments.

The bridegroom, a tall handsome man, knelt by her side on the altar steps, and made his responses in a clear, emphatic voice. Then when the service was over, and the register signed, to the jubilant, triumphant strains of Mendelssohn's Wedding March, leaning on the arm of her husband, Violet passed down the aisle.

This time her lovely eyes were lifted, and something of the soul expressed in the music, seemed to burn in them. It was the supreme hour of her life. Everything was illuminated by a golden halo. Flowers strewed her footsteps, a shower of violets were thrown over her; friends gathered round, the word "happiness" seemed to fill the air, and so Violet passed away from the incompleteness of her girlhood into the communion of married life.

CHAPTER II.

THE RIFT WITHIN THE LUTE.

THE honeymoon was over, and Mr. and Mrs. Standon were settled in their London home, a charming little house in Chelsea. One afternoon, Violet was busy arranging her numerous wedding presents, and Arthur was helping her.

"What are we to do with all your old photograph books?" Violet asked, lifting up an armful as she spoke.

"Just let me have a look at that big brown one," Arthur replied, and taking it from her, he sat down upon the sofa and begun turning over the pages. Presently Violet came and sat down by him, letting her head rest against his shoulder.

"These are pictures of my rooms in college," Arthur said. "I'm glad I've not lost this book. It's a sort of diary. How long it seems—eight years. I had a good time at Oxford—awfully good."

"And you did not even know of my existence then, Arthur?"

"Think of that, Violet. When I left college and was reading for the bar, I went down to see the place again. It made me feel so old to have no fear of the proctor, to see such boyish faces under the mortar-boards; and never a face I knew. That's my dog; poor old Spin. He always went in the boat with me, and if I gave him my coat to look after he would have been killed sooner than let anyone touch it. He was devoted to me. After all, I believe dogs are more faithful than human beings."

Violet's arm stole round her husband's neck, and her cheek rested against his.

Arthur continued turning over the pages.

"Oh, the college; that was the college where I took rooms four years ago. Just below Marlow Bridge. I was working, so my vacation had to be spent quietly."

"Was that your boat?"

"Yes; I hired a boat for the season."

"And the girl?"

Arthur bent forward and answered with a slight hesitation.

"The girl—oh, yes, the girl belonged to the people of the house where I had my rooms."

"But she's sitting in your boat."

"Well you see, she sometimes brought down the hamper of provisions—or the drinks," and then Arthur rather hurriedly turned to the next page, and soon after shut up the book and tossed it aside. "Sing to me, Violet," he said. "My soul is like the soul of Saul—it wants exercising."

Violet went to the piano, and sang:

"Is it a dream? then waking would be pain;
Oh, do not wake me—let me dream again."

* * * *

Mrs. Standon was to be presented at the first spring drawing-room by her husband's aunt, Lady Nelthorpe. She was to wear her wedding dress. It required alterations, so on the morning of the important day, it was sent to Chelsea from the dressmaker's under the care of the forewoman, who was to superintend its re-arrangement, and give the final touches when on.

Violet was standing before a large cheval glass in her dressing-room. The young woman who had brought the dress, a pale, delicate-looking girl, with golden hair, not unlike Violet's, was kneeling at her feet, putting a stitch here and there among the delicate folds of lace and shimmering white satin. Violet was looking her loveliest. Her train fell from her shoulders, her arms and neck were bare, her cheeks were flushed, her eyes were full of the light of conscious happiness, a smile was on her parted lips.

At this moment the door of the room opened, and Arthur came hurriedly in.

"I have rushed away from my work," he said, "just to have a

look at you before you kiss the queen's hand : and also, Violet, to bring this."

And as he spoke, he opened a jewel case lined with pale blue velvet on which reposed a diamond star.

"Oh, Arthur ! How exquisite," Violet exclaimed.

"It belonged to my mother. I have had the stones re-set, that is the reason my giving it to you has been delayed," he said.

Violet took the case, and lifting out the star placed it against her breast.

"You are looking beautiful, Violet," Arthur said, enthusiastically. "I am proud of my wife," and as he spoke he bent his head and lightly brushed her bare shoulder with his lips.

Then for the first time he noticed the girl kneeling on the floor. Violet, also, for the first time, since Arthur came in, remembered the girl's presence.

The girl rose up ; a crimson flush on her hitherto white face, and then Violet saw her husband's face turn livid even to his lips. She saw a look of recognition pass between them.

It was a drama in real life acted behind, but reflected in the cheval glass.

Violet did not turn or speak, still holding the star against her breast, which flashed and scintillated under a ray of sunshine, a whole life—past, present, and to come—was played out.

Neither her husband or the girl seemed conscious of her presence, a power stronger than she had ever possessed over Arthur re-asserted itself, and made him oblivious of everything else. The girl's face expressed scorn and reproach : Arthur's embarrassment and contrition.

The scene was all enacted in such a brief space of time, that Violet's statuesque attitude never changed. Then a dizzy sensation seized her, and the hand which had held the diamond star fell at her side. A faint feeling stole over her, all the surrounding objects faded away and became indistinct, a vast chasm opened at her feet ; but still she watched and saw Arthur take out a note-book, scribble a few lines in pencil, tear out the page, and press it into the girl's hand.

Lady Nelthorpe's carriage was announced. Mechanically Violet gathered up her train, turned and went downstairs. At the foot of them Arthur was waiting to offer her his arm. She had her train to hold, her fan, her bouquet ; she gave a silent refusal.

"If I can possibly manage it, I shall try and be home in time for the drawing-room tea," he said.

Violet would have given worlds to have been able to speak, but her tongue seemed paralyzed.

After getting into the carriage she looked back, Arthur was still standing on the steps. Coming down the staircase behind him was the slight figure of a fair girl in black. To Violet it seemed a new expression had come into the face—that the flush on the cheeks had not faded.

"It is always best under all circumstances in life," Lady Nelthorpe said, as the carriage rolled away towards Buckingham Palace, "to make oneself as comfortable as one can. My dear Violet, you look absolutely *frozen*. These early morning functions are so trying. Let me put this wrap quite lightly over you, and place your feet on my chauffeepied. I trust we shan't be trodden to death, and that we shall get proper refreshments. If one is both hungry and starved life is not worth living."

Violet remained so very quiet, that after a few ineffectual efforts to draw her into conversation, Lady Nelthorpe—attributing it to excitement—settled herself comfortably into a corner of the carriage, and also lapsed into silence. At any other time the remarks of the crowd through which they passed, after joining the long, slow procession of carriages, would have amused Violet, as it was she felt in a dream, far away from her present surroundings.

What did it all mean? Did it mean anything, or was she the victim of a delusion? Arthur—*her* Arthur—whom she had so implicitly trusted, unfaithful to her. The very idea was impossible.

She had so vehemently asserted to Mrs. Fellowes her faith in him could never be shaken, and now she was allowing a little episode—Arthur would be sure to explain satisfactorily—to sweep away her judgment. She was unworthy of him.

Arrived at Buckingham Palace, she tried to throw off her depression, and the fear that Lady Nelthorpe might notice anything unusual in her behaviour, enabled her to do so, or at any rate to keep a brave front.

"Throw your train over your arm, Violet, and keep close to me," Lady Nelthorpe said, as they forced their way through the crowd.

Everyone was eager, at this particular drawing-room, to be presented to the queen instead of a princess, and as Her Majesty only

remained a short time in the Throne Room, the struggle as to who could effect an entrance before the doors closed, was absolutely violent. Lady Nelthorpe was, however, a big woman with a determined spirit, the brilliant mob were elbowed aside with such success, that to the great admiration of her friends, to whom later she confided her tactics, she succeeded, where so many were destined to fail.

Violet had rehearsed her courtsey beforehand, and had felt dreadfully nervous as to how she would manage her train ; but when the time came, she was not in the least excited. She was very pale, and her eyes had a far-off look in them ; but she went through the ceremony with perfect ease, and quite to Lady Nelthorpe's satisfaction. She had wanted animation, but she had looked lovely all the same.

The preparations beforehand, and the getting to the Palace had taken so long, the actual presentation was over so quickly, that it hardly seemed worth while, Violet reflected, to have taken so much trouble and gone through so much fatigue for so small a result.

Once again in the carriage, and driving away from the Palace, Violet would have liked to return straight home, but she found this was impossible without offending Lady Nelthorpe. They went to the photographer's and were photographed, and then to Lady Nelthorpe's house in Grosvenor Place, where she was giving a drawing-room tea.

Arthur had almost promised to come to the tea, and every time the door opened, Violet felt her heart give a throb ; but though she stayed late, he did not put in an appearance.

Lady Nelthorpe's room was crowded with people, and about a dozen ladies were in their court dresses. The doings of the day were freely discussed, toilettes criticised and admired, and Violet had to appear interested. As the afternoon wore on, a wild desire to get back to Chelsea seized her ; she felt sure Arthur was home and waiting for her. There would be an explanation, a little scene, all the details of which she filled in, of course she would have to humiliate herself, confess her want of faith—and then be forgiven.

Her first words on reaching home were to ask if Mr. Standon had returned, and an answer in the negative was a bitter disappointment, to be followed by a still greater one, when the servant handed her a note in Arthur's handwriting, which had been sent by a boy messenger.

She tore it open, it was only a line.

"I am detained," he said, "by a rather important case, and afraid I can't be back in time for dinner, so don't wait for me. I shall join you later at the Markhams' ball."

The note dropped from Violet's hand, and the colour none of the excitements of the day had been able to call into her face, rushed into it now. Her mind leapt only to the conclusion.

Arthur wanted to avoid a *lête-à-lête*—an explanation. His staying away beyond the dinner hour was unusual. With one exception he had never done so before.

"I shall not dine," she said to the servant, "send me up some tea to my room ;" and then Violet went up the stairs with a slow step, supporting herself by the bannister.

When the maid had removed her finery, and she was alone, she threw herself on her bed and buried her face in the pillow. If she lost Arthur's love she would not care to live, she was still sure of that. Mrs. Fellowes had prophesied that if that time ever came she would "learn to accept the inevitable." She had warned her that she ought not to "expect too much in married life."

She hoped she would not meet the friend she still believed to be a false prophet. What if Ella looked into her eyes, read her unspoken thoughts, and triumphed over her ?

Worn out in body and mind, Violet at last fell asleep, and dreamt she was on the Thames, leaning over Marlow Bridge waiting for someone or something. A little way lower down she saw a small boat moored to the bank, and it became an object of interest to her. A girl was sitting in it, a girl with coils of fair hair. Presently she turned her head towards the bridge, and lifted her eyes till they rested on Violet's face—and the eyes were the eyes of the girl who had brought her court dress to Chelsea.

It was so late when at last Violet woke, that her maid assured her she would have to hurry in order to arrive in anything like reasonable time at the ball.

Violet got up quickly and desired the maid to dress her. She did not wish to miss the ball, for Arthur had positively said he would meet her at the Markhams'. At all events they would come home together. She was glad the weary day was nearly over, and the time so near when Arthur would more fully explain the reason of his absence—in fact, explain everything.

She grew impatient with the maid because she seemed inclined to

linger over the arrangement of her mistress's golden hair. She was vexed at having overslept herself, with an added feeling of wonder she could have done so when her mind was so troubled. The sleep had, however, refreshed her, and as she drove to the ball she felt almost cheerful. Was she not going to meet Arthur?

CHAPTER III.

THE INEVITABLE.

The ball was in full swing when Violet arrived. There was a crowd in the hall, a crowd on the stairs, banks of flowers and electric lights everywhere. Gay laughter mingled with music; but though she looked all about, there was no sign of Arthur.

Some man asked her to dance the waltz which was then being played; she allowed him to scribble a name on her card, and they passed into the ballroom. Later on, just at supper time, when an extra dance was being played, Violet was standing alone in one of the doorways, having sent her partner to fetch her an ice. She did not hear any footstep, but an arm was quietly slipped round her waist, and before she realized it was Arthur's, they were gliding together over the polished floor of the now half-deserted ballroom.

No explanation such as Violet had planned was possible, there was no opportunity. Just in his ordinary way Arthur asked her about the drawing-room, regretted he had missed his aunt's tea, was interested to hear if the photographing had been successful, and told her she was the belle of the ball.

Once more a brilliant colour flushed into Violet's cheeks, which did not leave them again that night. She tried to believe she was happy, that her confidence was unshaken, though in her heart of hearts she knew that it was not so.

It was daylight when the Standons got back to Chelsea. The sun was shining, and Violet felt to embark upon anything like a serious conversation was impossible; any conversation, at all involving the asking of questions, leading to an explanation of the mystery she was so anxious to solve. Though, even to herself she did not care to admit it, this was the very thing she knew Arthur was trying to avoid.

Several days passed. The same round of social gaiety went on.

Brilliantly dressed crowds swayed from one part of London to another, Ascot, Hurlingham, Ranelagh, to botanical *fêtes*, garden parties, exhibitions; and with a feverish desire for excitement, Violet went everywhere she was invited.

Several times she met Mrs. Fellowes, and the old intimacy had something strained in it. Violet's manner was not natural, and she avoided a *l'le-à-l'le*. The questioning expression in Mrs. Fellowes' eyes made her angry.

Everything went on between her and Arthur much as usual, only she was conscious the secure ground on which she had formerly believed she stood had shifted: a reserve had sprung up between them. There was no fault to be found with Arthur, nothing a wife could reasonably take hold of; but in spite of it, they drifted apart. In the early days of their married life, Violet would have asserted there was nothing she could not say to Arthur, now a feeling of timidity held her back from asking the *one* question she desired answered. What did he know about the girl who had brought her dress to Chelsea?

"I shan't be able to bear this state of things much longer," Violet said to herself, day after day. "Before I can rest I must feel sure there is some mistake, that I am imagining evil where none exists."

Then an idea struck her—an inspiration she thought it. She would go to Madame De Faye, to the Maison Nouvelle in Bond Street, where she had bought her wedding dress, order a new gown, and at the same time request to see the young woman who had been sent to Chelsea.

Acting at once upon this resolve, Violet ordered the brougham to be at the door at eleven o'clock in the morning, and desired the coachman to drive her to Bond Street. Arrived there, she was shown upstairs into a handsomely furnished room lined with mirrors, and draped with dark velvet curtains. Madame De Faye received her with effusion, and a flow of English and French combined.

Certainly. She would be delighted to make a charming toilette for the evening named. It was near the end of the season, but Madame would still be going out a great deal. Pale blue satin and chiffon—plenty of chiffon—would be most becoming to Madame's style of beauty.

Violet waited till Madame De Faye had decided all the details of

the dress, and then she asked if the forewoman who had been sent with her court dress to Chelsea, might be sent again to fit on this one.

Madame De Faye threw up her hands in despair. She was *désolée* not to be able to oblige Madame, but that forewoman had left her service. She had left her at a most important moment, just when they were overwhelmed with orders, and only a day or two after she had gone to Chelsea; she had made some absurd excuse about being sick, or having a sick mother, and had forfeited her wages and gone, where, Madame De Faye added, with a wave of her hand, she neither knew nor cared. Her base conduct, her ingratitude had caused such loss, such inconvenience, that she had wept over it, and had been made positively ill; but Madame, she added, need not regret her, a new forewoman had taken her place, a young woman with far more taste and greater experience than the last one, and she should be sent to Chelsea.

Violet said nothing. The same cold wave passed over her that had frozen her heart and stilled her pulse on the morning of the drawing-room.

Madame De Faye continued to talk about the "*quelquechose très élégante*" Madame might expect, the bouquet that would go with it, the jewels she must wear. She showed her down the stairs, and out into the carriage waiting at the door.

* * * *

Everyone said, when the season was waning to a close, that Mrs. Standon had greatly improved since her marriage. She had more manner, more style, and was quite one of the smartest women in London.

Of course she flirted. All the fashionable women belonging to the smart set had love affairs. She would not be in the fashion if she did not do like everyone else.

But Mrs. Standon had not seemed that kind of woman when first she married. She had altered very rapidly, she had grown cold and cynical—and even a little hard.

Very likely; but think of the education of a London season. The keen competition, the hollowness of it all. Mrs. Standon had been swept into the vortex; but anyhow, she had been a *success*.

* * * *

Violet was standing once more in front of her cheval glass; she

was dressed for a ball, in the pale blue satin and chiffon costume designed for her by Madame de Faye.

The reflection the mirror threw back was different to what it had been four months ago. What gossip had said was true, for in some ways she was more beautiful than she had been in the early days of her married life; but something had gone out of her face—some expression out of her lovely eyes, that would *never* come back.

The door opened, and Mrs. Standon's maid came in bringing with her a magnificent bouquet of white orchids and lilies. Violet stretched out her hand listlessly to take it, and carelessly withdrew a card concealed in the petals of the flowers. It was only a ball programme, but some initials were pencilled against ten dances. For a moment Violet bent over it, then she raised her head and met her own eyes in the glass. She tossed her bouquet and card on the sofa, and snatched the diamond star from her hair. She hated it because it was connected with such bitter memories.

Was Mrs. Fellowes right after all? Could it be true she was *learning to accept the inevitable*?

A crimson wave rose to her cheeks, a choking sensation came in her throat, and tears sprang to her eyes. She dashed them hastily away, and in answer to the servant's announcement that the carriage was waiting, turned to go.

She reached the door, then she paused—hesitated—and finally, with head erect and slightly thrown back, returned to the sofa, gathered up the bouquet, hid the card in the bosom of her dress, and went downstairs.

Some Sheridans.

ESPECIALLY

THE MARQUIS OF DUFFERIN AND AVA.

By ARCHIBALD COWIE.

IN Byron's monody on the death of Sheridan, recited at Drury Lane Theatre, there occur these lines :

" A mighty Spirit is eclipsed—a Power
Hath pass'd from day to darkness—to whose hour
Of light no likeness is bequeath'd—no name—
Focus at once of all the rays of Fame.

From the charm'd council to the festive board,
Of human feelings the unbounded lord ;
In whose acclaim the loftiest voices vied,
The praised—the proud—who made his praise their pride.

While Eloquence—Wit—Poesy—and Mirth,
That humbler Harmonist of care on Earth,
Survive within our souls—while lives our sense
Of pride in Merit's proud pre-eminence,
Long shall we seek his likeness—long in vain,
And turn to all of him that may remain,
Sighing that Nature form'd one but such man,
And broke the die—in moulding Sheridan."

Byron's lines are fine ; they impressed me so much on first reading them that twenty-five years after I could repeat them by heart—and one does not like to quarrel with them. At the time they were written it was doubtless true that no " likeness " of Sheridan, in the shape of flesh and blood, had been bequeathed, so far as the world knew, and it seemed that the Sheridan die had been broken. Fortunately, time has shown that Byron took too gloomy a view of the matter, and there has proved to be more of the Sheridan metal from the same rich mint. Moore, who knew Sheridan, and seems to have been jealous of him, nevertheless wrote of him in a powerful and touching poem as one

" Whose mind was an essence compounded with art,
From the finest and best of all other men's powers ;
Who ruled like a wizard the world of the heart,
And could call up its sunshine, or bring down its showers :—

Whose humour, as gay as the firefly's light,
Play'd round every subject, and shone, as it played :—
Whose wit, in the combat as gentle as bright,
Ne'er carried a heart stain away on its blade."

Her illustrious son, the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava, in the charming sketch with which he introduces us to the collection of her poems and songs, published by Mr. Murray, appears to think that the last two lines might be applied to the humour of his mother, Helen, Lady Dufferin, who was the grand-daughter of Sheridan. Judging from her published work and the recorded testimony of various people, some of them highly distinguished, who had the happiness to know her, Lord Dufferin might have applied to her with perfect justice the last six of the lines from Moore which are quoted above. To his lordship himself, his admirers, who are legion, may fairly apply the last stanza, while the following one has been applied :

" Whose eloquence bright'ning whatever it tried,
Whether reason or fancy the gay or the grave,
Was as rapid, as deep, and as brilliant a tide
As ever bore Freedom aloft on its wave."

That this is not an extravagant claim, or the language of exaggeration, sober, prosaic, demonstrated facts of recent history can be marshalled to establish. However, Lord Dufferin and his mother make only two Sheridans to whom exponents of the law of heredity may refer as examples. There have been—and, indeed, are for that matter—other Sheridans besides these, before and since the great Richard Brinsley, who might be cited as instances of the hereditary transmission of one or more brilliant characteristics.

As far back as "the spacious time of great Elizabeth," long before the days—1751 to 1816—of the Right Honourable Richard Brinsley Butler-Sheridan, to give his full style and title, his family were the wealthy and important possessors of castles and extensive lands in County Cavan, and, though their property was escheated in the time of "Good Queen Bess," they continued important by reason of their intellectual powers. Denis Sheridan, born about 1600, the friend of "the Saintly Bedell, Bishop of Kilmore," who

died in his house in 1642, translated the Scriptures into Irish. One son of this Sheridan succeeded Bedell as Bishop of Kilmore, another was Bishop of Cloyne, while a third, Thomas, who was a Privy Councillor and Secretary to the Government in Ireland under James II—whom he accompanied into exile and whose natural daughter he married—wrote a book called the “*Rise and History of Parliaments*,” important enough to be recently re-published with his life, also a history of his time that is praised by Macaulay and Mackintosh. The son of this historian, was Sir Thomas Sheridan, who, as secretary, was with Prince Charlie in the rising of 1745, and was one of “the seven men of Moidart.” One Sheridan who had amassed a fortune in San Domingo—“a phenomenal Sheridan,” Lord Dufferin thinks him—settled in France where his son got the marquisate of Etiau, and that son’s heiress married first the Marquis de Brèves and de Jarzé, and secondly the Marquis de Maillé de la Tour Landry, and was mother to the Comtesse d’Hautefort who was with the Duchesse de Berry in prison. Another Sheridan, Dr. Thomas, was distinguished for wit, liveliness and good nature, was the friend of both Swift and Stella, and a well-known scholar, while his son, who edited Swift’s works and wrote his life, also an English dictionary, a play, and works on education and elocution, was an intimate of Dr. Johnson and Garrick, and was the father of the famous Richard Brinsley, also of Charles Sheridan, who became a member of the Irish Parliament, and wrote a history of the Swedish revolution in 1772.

Of Sheridan the Great, as we shall call Richard Brinsley, to distinguish him from the rest of the Sheridan dynasty, there remain in his plays—

“The matchless dialogue—the deathless wit,
Which knew not what it was to intermit;
The glowing portraits, fresh from life, that bring
Home to our hearts the truths from which they spring;
Those wondrous beings of his fancy, wrought
To fulness by the fiat of his thought.”

As Lord Dufferin reminds us in his fascinating account of the family with which he introduces us to the sketch of his mother, Sheridan, during his long Parliamentary career, sacrificed, although a poor man, repeated opportunities of emolument, would not take a peerage, and ever fought on the side of justice, liberty and humanity,

opposing the war with America, denouncing slavery, the tyranny of Warren Hastings, and the trade restrictions on Ireland, advocated Catholic emancipation, and tried to save the French Royal Family. To quote Byron again :

" When the loud cry of trampled Hindostan
Arose to Heaven in her appeal from man,
His was the thunder—his the avenging rod,
The wrath—the delegated voice of God,
Which shook the nations through his lips, and blazed
Till vanquish'd senates trembled as they praised."

History has already proved Sheridan to have been a statesman as far-sighted as he was eloquent and witty, and that, in the language of Mr. Swinburne's " Songs before Sunrise," he might have claimed of his country,

" I am thy storm-thrush in the days that darken,
The petrel in the foam that bears thy bark
To port, through night and tempest. If thou harken
My voice is in the heaven before the lark."

But the country did not wholly harken, and paid the penalty in blood, tears, treasure and much else. And yet in spite of

" Tortures the poor alone can know,
The proud alone can feel,"

Of Sheridan, as of Burns, to whom the lines were applied, it may be said

" He kept his honesty and truth,
His independent tongue and pen,
And moved in manhood, as in youth,
Pride of his fellow men."

Not only in the pathetic close of their meteoric careers, but in some other directions might the analogy between Burns and Sheridan be pursued. Here, however, we must leave Sheridan the Great, pausing only to barely mention his well-attested geniality, good nature, charming manners, handsome person—" his splendid eyes were the very home of genius," says Lord Dufferin—his disinterested and romantic marriage to the divine Miss Linley, whose loveliness is preserved in portraits by Sir Joshua Reynolds, Romney and Gainsborough, as St. Cecilia and the fairest of the Christian Graces,

and whose constancy and devotion to her husband, amidst the greatest trials and temptations, is a priceless heritage to posterity, especially in these days of epicene and rampant "New women." Sheridan the Great had by her a son named Thomas, while Sheridan had also another son Charles by a second marriage with Miss Ogle. This Thomas Sheridan was the maternal grandfather of Lord Dufferin. According to the author of "Sheridan and his Times," no man was ever more universally admired than this Thomas Sheridan, and such was the charm and easy grace of his wit, that wherever he went he was hailed with delight. It is of this Sheridan that the following story is told :

His father, remonstrating with him about something, remarked, "Why, Tom, *my* father would never have permitted me to do such a thing." "Sir," indignantly retorted the son, "do you presume to compare *your* father to *my* father?"

It was a grandson of Sheridan the Great's sister, Alicia, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, author of "*Uncle Silas*," and other novels, and of the capital ballad, "*Shamus O'Brien*," who, when a little boy, wrote a brief and witty essay on the life of man which he thus divided, (1), Youth and Innocence, when he is engaged in planning villainy; (2), Manhood, when he is engaged in practising it, and (3), Dotage, when he is engaged in penitence.

To return to Thomas Sheridan. He married one daughter, Caroline Henrietta, of Colonel Callender of Ardkinglas and Craigforth, by a daughter of the Earl of Antrim, while Sir James Graham, of Netherby, married the other daughter, Fanny Callender. Both these Callenders were beautiful women. Several notable beauties, the late Lady Houghton, the Duchesses of Leinster and Montrose, Viscountess Grimston, the Countess of Faversham, and Ladies Helen Vincent, Cynthia Graham, and Ulrica Duncombe descended from Fanny Callender, Lady Graham. But it is with the offspring of the marriage between Lady Graham's sister, Henrietta Callender and Thomas Sheridan, that, for the purpose of this article, we are chiefly concerned. The eldest son, Brinsley, eloped with the daughter of, and heiress to the great wealth of, Sir Colquhoun Grant, who forgave him, and left his personal property to him. The son of this romantic marriage, Mr. Algernon Sheridan, wedded the daughter of Motley, the distinguished historian, and lives at Frampton Court, Dorsetshire, so the wealth of which the Sheridans were deprived in Ireland

has come back on this side of the channel. The rest of the issue of Thomas Sheridan's marriage with Henrietta Callender were (1) Helen, who married the Hon. Price Blackwood, a Captain in the Royal Navy, who afterwards succeeded to the title of Lord Dufferin, and was father of the present peer; (2) Caroline, who became the Hon. Mrs. Norton, and afterwards Lady Stirling Maxwell, of Keir; (3) Georgina, who became Duchess of Somerset, and (4, 5) two sons, Frank and Charles, both handsome and highly gifted, who died young. From the second of these three sisters—"The Three Graces," as they are known to history from their beauty and accomplishments—descended Brinsley, Lord Grantley, and Richard, Lord Grantley, and from the third sister, the Duchess of Somerset—who was Queen of Beauty in the Eglinton Tournament—Ferdinand, Earl of St. Maur, Lord Edmund St. Maur, and Lady Hermione St. Maur, who married her cousin Sir Frederick Graham of Netherby.

Mr. Thomas Sheridan died at the Cape, where he had filled an appointment, and his widow returned to England where she was given apartments in Hampton Court Palace, and out of a small pension contrived to educate her children to some purpose.

Let us take a glimpse of her family as revealed to us in Frances Kemble's "*Records of a Girlhood*," after the second daughter had married the Hon. Mr. Norton, brother to Lord Grantley; "The Nortons' house was close to the issue from St. James's Park (Storey's Gate). I remember passing an evening with them there, when a host of distinguished public and literary men were crowded into their small drawing-room, which was resplendent with the light of Sheridan beauty, male and female. Mrs. Sheridan (Miss Callender), the mother of the Graces, more beautiful than anybody but her daughters; Lady Graham, their beautiful aunt; Mrs. Norton; Mrs. Blackwood (Lady Dufferin); Georgina (Duchess of Somerset, and Queen of Beauty by universal consent); and Charles Sheridan their younger brother, a sort of younger brother of the Apollo Belvedere. Certainly, I never saw such a bunch of beautiful creatures all growing on one stem."

Again, Lord Lamington, "*In the days of the Dandies*," tells us, "There were at this time three sisters, fairest among the fairest, Lady Seymour, Lady Dufferin and Mrs. Norton, who afford the highest proof of the transmission of hereditary qualities. Miss Linley was equally remarkable for the grace and charm of womanhood. The

grandchildren possessed the united gifts which won all hearts. No one who has ever met Lady Dufferin could forget her rare combination of grace, beauty and wit."

That Lady Dufferin was as good, sweet and lovable as she was graceful, beautiful and witty, there is plenty of independent evidence, even if Lord Dufferin, by reason of his filial affection and adoration, be regarded as a not impartial witness on the subject. In addition to the testimony of others who knew her, but were in no way related to her, there remain as evidence the indisputable facts of her life and the fruits of her pen. Married so young that her only son could remember her twenty-first birthday, she was only a short time afterwards left a widow, young and beautiful, and was soon besieged by offers of marriage, some of which would have made her mistress of princely homes with the advantages of wealth and the highest rank in the peerage, but, although anything but rich for a peeress, she preferred to devote herself to her son, and not until he had married would she listen to any, and then only consented to become Countess of Gifford, when the Earl, who had worshipped her for twenty years, could not rise from his death-bed, on which she married him to soothe it with untiring devotion. Lord Dufferin tells us that her beautiful character is best shown in her letters, which he intends to publish, and they are looked forward to with eager interest. Meanwhile we have in her poems, more especially in those addressed to her son, a revelation of her so enchanting that it can hardly fail to captivate the world as long as maternal love shall continue.

It is by her songs, such as "The Irish Emigrant," "Terence's Farewell," "Katey's Letter," "The Charming Woman," etc., that Lady Dufferin has been popularly known; but it is into the poems addressed to her son that she has put "the heart's blood of her song," and it is probably by these that she will ultimately take her place in the choir of sweet singers destined to lasting fame. Until recently Lord Dufferin's modesty had deterred him from publishing them in anything approaching to a form generally accessible, hence they are by no means so widely known as they deserve to be. Let us, therefore, notice some. On the occasion of his coming of age, she presented him with a silver lamp, bearing the inscription, "Fiat lux," and accompanied the present with these lovely lines addressed to him:—

"How shall I bless thee? Human love
 Is all too poor in passionate words;
 The heart aches with a sense above
 All language that the lip affords:
 Therefore a symbol shall express
 My love—a thing not rare or strange,
 But yet—eternal—measureless—
 Knowing no shadow and no change.
 Light! which, of all the lovely shows
 To our poor world of shadows given,
 The fervent Prophet—voices chose,
 Alone as attribute of heaven!

At a most solemn power we stand,
 From this day forth, for evermore,
 This weak but loving human hand
 Must cease to guide thee as of yore.
 Then, as thro' life thy footsteps stray,
 And earthly beacons dimly shine,
 'Let there be light,' upon thy way,
 And holier guidance far than mine!
 'Let there be light' in thy clear soul,
 When passion tempts and doubts assail;
 When grief's dark tempests o'er thee roll,
 'Let there be light' that shall not fail!

So, Angel guarded, may'st thou tread
 The narrow path which few may find,
 And at the end look back, nor dread
 To count the vanished years behind!
 And pray that she, whose hand doth trace
 This heart-warm prayer—when life is past—
 May see and know thy blessed face,
 In God's own glorious light at last!"

It was to contain these lines, which he got engraved on it in letters of gold, that Lord Dufferin built, in the grounds of the family seat of Clandeboyne overlooking Belfast Lough, the monument known as "Helen's Tower," which commands a lovely and extensive view, and evoked the muse of Tennyson and Browning, both of whom wrote inscriptions for it.

Tennyson's runs thus:

"Helen's Tower, here I stand
 Dominant over sea and land.
 Son's love built me, and I hold
 Mother's love engraved in gold."

Browning's lines are better :

" Who hears of Helen's Tower, may dream perchance
How the Greek beauty from the Scæn Gate
Gazed on old friends unanimous in hate,
Death-doom'd because of her fair countenance.

Hearts would leap otherwise at thy advance,
Lady to whom this Tower is consecrate !
Like hers, thy face once made all eyes elate,
Yet, unlike hers, was blessed by every glance.

The tower of Hate is outworn far and strange :
A transitory shame of long ago,
It dies into the sand from which it sprang ;
But thine Love's rock-built Tower, shall fear no change ;
God's Self laid stable earth's foundations so,
When all the morning stars together sang."

Lord Dufferin, in giving his mother's poems to the world, remarks, " I have had some doubts whether I should add to the others the verses addressed to myself ; but it seemed to me that poems which expressed such genuine love in so direct and simple a manner would probably appeal to many a mother's heart, who would be glad to find expressed in musical language the thoughts which were struggling for utterance in her own breast." There cannot be a doubt of this ; moreover, sons as well as mothers will treasure these beautiful lines.

Lord Dufferin is a very great man indeed in more than one way—the greatest viceroy, the greatest diplomatist, and at least one of the greatest statesmen of the Victorian era ; a brilliant writer, an eloquent and graceful orator, a genuine poet—though little of his poetry has taken the form of verse—an intrepid and skilful sailor, " a very perfect gentle knight," from whom his friend Tennyson might have got hints for King Arthur's court, and altogether a most charming man. Yet illustrious as his career has been, there is perhaps nothing in it that will command such universal admiration as his treatment of the poem we have quoted. Let us glance at a few more which he inspired. Here are extracts from Lady Dufferin's lines " On my Child's Picture " :

" The full, soft lids, half-raised above
 Those blue and dreamy eyes,
 Within whose gaze of trusting love
 No fear—no falsehood lies !
 Like lonely lakes of Heaven's pure rain,
 Reflecting only Heaven again."

* * *

" Thy laugh,—that music prized above
 All happy sounds of earth,—
 The eternal riches of thy love
 Thou light of her lone hearth,
 Whose presence made this sad life be
 Too dear to lose—in leaving thee ! "

These are from a poem addressed to him on one of his birthdays :

" The ' perfect love that casteth out
 All fear ' hath kept its promise true ;—
 Whose love is strong, can never doubt
 That love to be immortal too.
 Henceforth I am content to trust
 The Giver with the blessing given ;
 I know, when all things else are dust,
 Our love shall make a part of Heaven."

In another poem to her son she writes :

" When I am reading I would have thee near me
 To share the brilliant thought, or graceful phrase ;
 Or if I sing—what matter who may hear me,
 If I must miss thy fond unlearned praise ?

See how thou steal'st the colour and the savour
 From out my life when we apart must be !
 And yet, thou know'st, ' I thank my God for ever
 ' For all remembrance,' my beloved, ' of thee.' "

To have had such poems addressed to him by such a true, brilliant and beautiful woman was in itself enviable distinction, but to have proved by his subsequent life that he deserved all this beautiful and touching affection is to have achieved still higher fame.

Charles Kingsley adjured his daughter :

" Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever ;
 Do noble things, not dream them, all day long ;
 And so make life, death, and that vast for-ever
 One grand, sweet song."

In this sense Lord Dufferin's life has been a "grand sweet song," in which intellect as well as virtue has been a dominant note. He was seventy-one last June. When he returned from the Paris Embassy a year or two ago he had spent fifty years in the public service, many of them in diplomatic capacities. If there be any truth in the definition of a diplomatist as one who is "sent abroad to lie for the benefit of his country," to have proved the greatest of our diplomatists and yet lived up to his family motto, *Straight Forward*, is surely a remarkable feat: yet he appears to have achieved it.

Speaking at the annual Civil Service dinner last June, he referred to officials in India as "devoted men working in an obscurity which is seldom penetrated by the sun of popular appreciation, and with the knowledge that others will reap where they have sown," and, addressing members of the English Civil Service, added, "I have not touched upon your greatest merit. I daresay in your modesty you yourselves will wonder which it is of your many excellences that I have failed to enumerate. Well, gentlemen, it is this—that in these days of endless platform speechifying and wearisome loquacity, which is lowering the prestige of the House of Commons and rendering life a burden to our statesmen, you are a silent folk. You never break the hearts of the reporters with your bad grammar, or exhaust the patience of public audiences with your platitudes. (Laughter.) However hard you work you do not talk about it. A great city which I recently visited was peopled with statues of dead politicians, and every one of these marble effigies stood in an attitude of violent oratorical gesticulation. (Loud laughter.) As I passed them one after another I could not help saying to myself, 'How little did all this sound and fury mean at the time; how much less has come of it, and how much greater a share those who, like you, are the mute servants of the State, have contributed to the splendour and might of the Empire than those whose resounding volubility has filled the air with an evanescent clamour!'" (Cheers.)

It is in mute service to the State that much of Lord Dufferin's time has been spent, and all that he has contributed to the might and splendour of the Empire cannot be fully learnt till modern Cabinets and various Embassies shall have yielded up their secrets. In a general way it is well known that he proved a consummate master of diplomacy in every Court of any importance in Europe, and successfully

grappled with ticklish and complicated international troubles, so all that he said about the Civil Service generally applies forcibly to himself. Buried in Blue Books are monuments of his wonderful combination of brilliancy, tact, industry, statesmanship, enlightened humanity and patriotism ; but so great, so inspiring a theme as Lord Dufferin's public services would take a volume, or rather volumes, to attempt.

How, as if by magic, he transformed Canada into the loyal, united and prosperous Dominion of to-day, from the disaffected, disjointed colonies of a few years ago ; how, by another transformation scene, he secured our highway to the East, and gave Egypt a constitution that meant for it comparative freedom and prosperity ; how he consolidated, and at the same time expanded our Empire in the East ; what a worthy helpmeet he had in his wife ; how honours and titles were showered upon him ; how high he stands in his Sovereign's estimation ; how, during the celebration of the Diamond Jubilee, it was felt that he had been the chief of the modern Empire makers ; how, even in his retirement, by selecting as his favourite recreation the manly, innocent and wholesome amusement of yachting, he helps to foster nautical proclivities—that liking for salt water which had so much to do with the creation of the Empire, and has so much to do with its preservation ;—all this will make a most stimulating and enthralling story one day. Here we must be content to quote a few of the lines, in which Tennyson dedicated the last volume of his poems to the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava, and celebrated some of his services :

“ At times our Britain cannot rest,
At times her steps are swift and rash ;
She moving, at her girdle clash
The golden keys of East and West.

Not swift nor rash, when late she lent
The sceptres of her West, her East,
To one, that ruling, has increased
Her greatness and her self-content.

• Your rule has made the people love
Their ruler. Your viceregal days
Have added fulness to the phrase
Of ‘ Gauntlet in the velvet glove.’

But since your name will grow with Time
Not all, as honouring your fair fame
Of statesmen, have I made your name
A golden portal to my rhyme."

The conclusion is reached with another quotation from Tennyson:

" Even the homely farm can teach us that there is something in descent."

Taking the Sheridan family only, there is clearly a great deal in descent, and their case is a striking illustration of hereditary transmission of mental and physical qualities, especially of the theory that the mother rather than the father is to be credited with them in the case of sons. Sheridan the Great had a remarkable mother, his father's wife having been Miss Chamberlaine, grand-daughter of Sir Oliver Chamberlaine, She is described as an exceptionally clever woman. From her, according to Lord Dufferin, Sheridan "obtained the divine spark which converted the mere talents he may be supposed to have inherited from his father into the genius which made him famous." She was a successful novelist and playwright. In the case of Lord Dufferin himself, it is obvious that his mother was the predominating influence, and he was more indebted to her than to his father, which circumstance cannot be said to constitute any reflection on the Blackwood side of the house; for whatever family the female Sheridans married into they transmitted to their descendants more or less of the Sheridan characteristics, with the result that the family have blossomed in later and more prosperous times into a brilliant galaxy of beauty, wit and talent.

Lady Top Pickers at Felborne.

By SARAH CATHERINE BUDD.

Author of "MOZART," "CARMEN SYLVA," "PRINCESS ALICE,"
etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

IT was a hot autumn day, full of slumberous warmth.

In a luxurious room, whose long windows overlooked one of the London parks, sat two girls, the elder with a very discontented expression on her beautiful face.

"It is no use giving me such looks," said Caroline Digby, sharply, glancing at her fair young sister. "I cannot be patient. Mrs Selwyn actually means to leave us here in London, and go away with her husband on this mysterious journey, from which you and I are excluded."

"But surely you don't want to go with her, dear," said Florence. "We shall be so happy together."

"Of course we don't want to go with her for the love of her, if that is what you mean, Florence," replied Caroline, haughtily; and then a silence fell, broken only by the buzzing of a fly on the window pane.

At last a soft voice was once more heard.

"Carrie, dear, the fortnight will soon pass, and then remember we are all going to Switzerland."

"You are always too easily consoled," said Miss Digby, as she sat down, and carelessly took up a newspaper.

She had scarcely, however, read a line, when glancing towards her sister, she saw a bright drop fall on the page Florence was pretending to read. In an instant, away went the paper, and Caroline knelt by the girl's side, with eyes shining with love, and murmuring words of endearment.

"Oh, Flo, my little darling, you are always right. I will try to be patient, and not vex you. See, now, I will go on reading my newspaper close to you, and you shall enjoy your book in peace."

They sat thus for a few minutes, and silence again fell, to be broken by an exclamation from Caroline.

"Oh, Florence, this is the very thing, the best idea in the world." Miss Digby's cheeks were the colour of a damask rose, and her eyes were shining like stars. She knelt down by her sister once more, and gaily said: "I have just been reading that a number of gentle people are actually gone hop picking into Kent, Flo. We will go hop picking as well, we will play being village girls, and work for money. Selborne shall be the place, there are hop gardens close to where Gilbert White once lived. Oh," she went on excitedly, clasping her hands, "think of the free, full, open life, the sweetly smelling hops, the blue sky, far away from this dingy London. Oh, the fun of a fortnight to ourselves hop picking in Hampshire, away from this artificial life, this stifling atmosphere. I wish we could start this very moment."

Florence Digby's cheeks paled, and a frightened look came into her eyes.

"Carrie," she cried, "you must be saying this by way of a joke, it never could be done, it would be wrong to think of such a thing even for a moment."

"Would it indeed! Speak for yourself, Florence. I am free as air," then, rising from the ground, Miss Digby went on clearly and slowly, "I am going to Selborne; you can stay at home. Flo, don't look so distressed; let us argue the matter out," she went on in a kinder tone of voice. "We two poor girls, you know, have never had a father or mother's care, not even any relative to speak of. Left in early childhood to the guardianship of these Selwyns—and, Florence, remember, our parents never could have known what *she* was like, never. Well, I put it to you, have we ever had a real home, or love, or care like other girls? Do we owe her any real obedience? No, not one *iota*."

"We have always been surrounded by luxury; have lived in a beautiful house, Caroline; been waited on, well educated; that is something."

"But we have never had a real home. And besides, whose money has paid for all this? Yours and mine. Has Mrs. Selwyn ever given us a real motherly kiss, or denied herself one single pleasure for our sakes? Never—never. Except for each other, we are loveless and homeless. The upshot of the whole matter is," she continued slowly, "that I am certainly going to Selborne. I am nearly twenty-two, and, therefore, quite the mistress of myself and

my fortune. I simply stay on here until you are of age, and not one moment longer after that. You must choose, Florence, between your fancied duty to Mrs. Selwyn and your love for me. The very thought of Selborne sends a fresh glow through all my veins. I can always get on with the servants, and can entirely bind them over to us, you need have no fear on that score. The Selwyns will never know, and our maid can have a holiday. Come, Florence, choose between Mrs. Selwyn and me, that is simply all, Mrs. Selwyn or me."

"I still cannot think it is quite right," replied Florence, "but you know, Carrie, I would go with you to the ends of the earth."

Caroline kissed her tenderly. "You would, my darling, how well I know it."

While this conversation was going on in one room, there was a curious dialogue being carried on in another.

Mrs. Selwyn was reclining in an easy chair talking with her husband. He was a noble looking man, possessed of fine qualities, the wonder was, how he could ever have married his cold, selfish wife.

For once, he was remonstrating with her. There was an uneasy flush on his brow as he said, "You know I never interfere about the girls, but in this case——"

"They are not your cousins," sharply interrupted Mrs Selwyn.

"They are not, certainly; but fair dealing is always the best policy—*always*, Jane, in every transaction, great or small."

She smiled insolently at his earnestness.

"Spare yourself a sermon, for I shall take my own way."

"I know you will," returned Mr. Selwyn, with a heavy sigh, as he took up a book, too lazy to continue the struggle.

"Stay," cried Mrs. Selwyn, "before you bury yourself in your books, let me give you my reason for not taking the girls to this wedding, even not letting them know that it is to a wedding we are going. This is the reason, John Selwyn," she went on, with uplifted finger. "I have more affection for our only son than you have, and I mean—yes, thoroughly and entirely mean—that Caroline shall marry my son Edward. She is very handsome, very rich; he shall carry off the prize."

Mr. Selwyn frowned. "Of course I should be delighted; but Caroline will choose for herself, be very sure of that, when her time

comes. Besides, how does this wedding affect your plans for Ned?"

"Oh, the ignorance of men! Haven't you the sense to see that Caroline takes a great interest in your nephew, George Temple: well, he will be at the wedding, and Edward cannot get home from Germany in time; now I hope you see my meaning. A wedding is such an opening for young people to be foolish. I don't like Caroline, but still, Edward must marry her, and it is my duty to see that she and George shall not be thrown together to drift into love."

"Love indeed! why they are always quarelling. You are lowering yourself by scheming, and to no purpose."

"I can see deeper into things than a man," replied Mrs. Selwyn, significantly.

"But even if Carrie were to marry George, I confess I see no objection. Lazy, certainly, but a fine fellow with a good property."

"I detest him," said Mrs. Selwyn, with acrimony. "A great loose-limbed fellow, indolent and proud; he can't light a candle to my son."

Mr. Selwyn mentally compared the two young men, then with a sigh, once more took up his book, only saying, "I would let things take their course, Jane."

"I will not," returned Mrs. Selwyn, coldly, "and the result will prove me right."

The very next day the Selwyns departed, and the young people were free to make hasty preparations for their journey.

As Caroline had predicted, the servants fell into the project at once. They detested their mistress, and loved the girls, and the idea of the former being circumvented was delightful to them.

Very free remarks had been made in the servants' hall as to the young ladies being left behind, and now the idea gained ground with them that the girls were going to visit some poor relatives of whom Mrs. Selwyn was too proud to take any notice. The real plan was, of course, kept a profound secret.

Caroline, accompanied by her maid, went out to buy some dark blue serge dresses, and to go to the bank for some money. She greatly enjoyed signing her own cheques and managing her own money. It was a new thing yet, to become irksome later on.

Miss Digby took the precaution to buy a small, very plain dressing case—her own being much too handsome to be used in their preten-

ded station—and with this and a tiny portmanteau she returned to Florence in high glee.

The next day, in repressed excitement, they passed through the line of servants in the hall, down the wide steps and into a cab bound for Waterloo Station.

"There," cried Caroline, exultantly, as the carriage drove off, and she nodded brightly to the kind faces looking after them, "there, we are really off. I have tipped the servants well, and in any case we are perfectly safe."

Then the girls looked at each other and laughed.

They wore tight-fitting dark blue serge dresses, and plain sailor hats with ribbon to match the dresses. They each had a dark, sensible waterproof, and one girl took charge of the tiny portmanteau, and the other of the dressing case. Thus they were not too much encumbered, and yet had no worry about luggage.

"It really seems like some fairy tale," said Caroline, looking at her sister's lovely face, dimpling into smiles.

"Yes, quite a fairy tale; and we are going out into the world to make our fortunes. And, oh, Carrie, do let us try, before we come back, to help some poor people—you know Mrs. Selwyn will never let us practically do anything in that way—then our visit will not be entirely selfish."

Caroline nodded; and they soon came to the bustling Waterloo Station.

They were a little bewildered at first, without their maid, but soon Carrie's good sense came to her aid, and finding they had a few minutes to wait for their train, they sat down on an empty seat on the platform, and eagerly discussed their plans. So earnestly were they engrossed, and so fully and freely did they enter into everything, even about one hundred pounds, which Carrie had in her dressing case, that two men—one man sitting behind them, and another standing near—might have heard every word, had they been so disposed.

At last the train came puffing into the station, and they were soon fairly on their way to Selborne. The country looked lovely as they flew by, under the brilliant sunshine, and the foliage everywhere was changing into its gorgeous autumn tints.

They travelled third class for the first time, and Florence had rather a frightened look on her delicate face as she followed her

sister. Not so Caroline, who stepped into the carriage with the look and bearing of a princess. Florence sat down quickly in a corner and looked at nobody, while Caroline, on the contrary, looked round smilingly upon all—the old market women, the curly-haired children, and the withered up old shoemaker in the corner.

She gave especial attention, however, to a thin, pathetic-eyed woman in another corner, and before she left the train, she had listened to the woman's sorrowful history, and had given her some substantial help.

"Now wasn't that splendid?" exclaimed Caroline, as she stepped lightly down at the station which lay nearest to Selborne. "We have already begun helping people; don't you remember it is said, 'one ought to leave a track of brightness on one's path;' we have begun the track, haven't we, Flo?"

"Yes, indeed; it seems like a good omen for our holidays." Florence Digby's eyes, by this time, had lost their frightened look, and there was a lovely wild rose tint on her cheeks.

"The worst of it is," remarked Caroline, as they went into the waiting room, "we don't look rough enough, somehow, we don't look like hop pickers. One would have thought these plain dresses would have done the deed. You are the worst, Flo; everyone will think, I am afraid, that we are gentle people when they look at you, and that we are simply masquerading."

"It is too late to trouble about that now; we shall be really hop pickers, you know."

"Yes, yes," replied Carrie; "and just look at the beautiful country stretched around us, so fresh and free. No; we won't bother."

From the station the young travellers took a cab which was to set them down on the outskirts of Selborne. The cabman looked them shrewdly over, and asked about double his proper fare which, however, they cheerfully paid. And behold! the girls were at last actually entering Selborne.

The Selborne of their hopes and dreams! destined by them never to be forgotten until death should come to them and blot out all earthly memories.

CHAPTER II.

It was a most lovely afternoon.

A touch of autumn's glories might be seen in the grand trees which clothed Selborne Hanger. To the left of them, as the girls entered the village, was the Lythe with its broken ground and fine trees, its green precipices and slopes.

"Oh, how lovely!" cried Florence, leaning over a low wall, and gazing as if she never meant to go away. "Isn't this glorious?"

"It is, indeed, Flo; but look at that grand old hanger on our right, clothed with trees; it looks even finer, and far away in the blue distance rises hill upon hill."

They walked slowly on until they reached the middle of the village, and the Plestor, which is a kind of square or village green, the church lying close to it on the left, and the rectory and other houses on either side. In the middle of the square, or plestor—as it was called in ancient days—is a wide-spreading tree and a pleasant seat under its shade. Here a tired-looking peasant woman was resting, having placed her heavy basket by her side. By the time, however, the girls had reached the tree, she had taken up her load, and departed.

"Well, Selborne is lovelier than I thought," cried Caroline, as they sat down under the spreading branches. "This village green must be much the same as it was hundreds of years ago. Once there were little shops all around here, and they called it the Plestor."

"Yes, Carrie; and here the boys and girls played together as, no doubt, they do to this day. Is not the air delicious? so different from smoky London."

"Yes, Flo, and it makes one hungry, and sad to say we have eaten all our sandwiches. Never mind; we will just go and look at Gilbert White's house and the fountain to his memory, and then——"

"Then," interrupted Florence, "we must look for apartments."

"Of course, yes," said Caroline, carelessly; "but that will be no trouble."

They walked slowly through the village street, not remarked upon in any way, except for their beauty. The Selborne folk are accustomed to see strangers wandering about their roads.

After the girls had stood watching the sparkling waters of the

fountain at Wellhead for a long time, Caroline suddenly roused herself.

"Florrie," she said, "the afternoon is drawing on, we must now look for apartments."

So they turned, and walked slowly back through the village, enquiring at every house—for the most part very humble ones—but at every place they received one of two answers, "they never let apartments," or "they were full." The girls took this very lightly at first, but as they neared the end of the street, steps quickened, and there was some anxiety in the young faces. Florrie's cheeks paled also, and there came a frightened, piteous expression into her eyes.

"Only three more houses, Carrie; if they won't take us in, what-ever shall we do?"

Alas! the usual answer was returned, and the girls looked at each other in silent dismay. For a moment only with Caroline, she saw the look in Florrie's face, and made up her mind. She smiled a calm and reassuring smile, and placing her trembling sister under the wide-spreading tree once more, she went to a shop near by to make enquiries.

Florence watched her sister disappear into the shop with the most desolate feeling at her heart which she had ever known. Despite Mrs Selwyn's selfishness, Florence had, with her sister, lived a sheltered and, on the whole, a happy life. And now she seemed cut away from her moorings, drifting into an unknown sea, homeless and friendless. To her timid nature this experience was something dreadful. She looked despairingly at the golden lights and the lengthening shadows.

"Oh, could they not get away from this dreadful place; get back to the shelter of a home, never again to leave it? Oh! why had they come? Here were all these houses, and yet not one to give them shelter. Would they have," she wildly asked herself, "to crouch down in the church porch all night, or on the bleak hillside, or in some dreadful shed? Well, they would be dead before the morning." She turned away her head from the lovely views. The blue sky and all the beauty seemed only a mockery. "Oh, why, why had they come?"

At this moment Carrie re-appeared with a bag of biscuits in her hand, and with a resolute air. To her sister's anxious questioning look, she simply shook her head.

Florrie's eyes grew white with fear.

"Oh, Carrie, whatever shall we do?"

"Do, why eat some biscuits; if you don't I won't tell you of my plan."

"I can't, Carrie, I should choke."

"Florence, you must and shall eat."

The cold look, the stern tone, took effect, and the two girls ate their biscuits in silence, watching the lengthening shadows with beating hearts.

Presently Florrie spoke.

"Caroline, I have eaten some biscuits; now what are we going to do? Oh, let us go back to London. Oh, Carrie," with a little sob, "do—do let us go back."

"Don't be such a baby; there is no train and no conveyance. Did you notice the inn we passed just now? It looked respectable and clean. There we must go, speak to the woman, have a nice tea and go to bed, and make our arrangements on the morrow."

"Oh, Caroline; to a little wayside inn, I know it will kill me. Oh, why don't people let apartments?"

At this moment, almost as if he had sprung from the earth, a dark, rough-looking man came from the other side of the tree, and touching his hat, said politely:

"Are you looking for apartments, ladies?"

The man had a pale face and dark eyes, and was dressed in shabby black; but an angel of light could not have been more welcome to Florence Digby.

"Oh, do you know of any?" she cried. "We are so anxious to get some; we shall indeed be grateful." Her face lighted up, a rose-leaf tint came into her cheek, her sweet blue eyes sparkled.

"I think I can help you, young ladies," the man responded, quickly. "It is true I am also a stranger, in fact I believe I came by the same train that you did; but I was directed to a short cut through the fields from the station, which brought me out near the Hanger, and from a little cottage near by, some visitors were leaving, and I heard the woman say she was ready for some more lodgers."

"Ah; the Hanger," said Caroline, "we did not go so far as that."

"Never mind, Carrie; come at once, else someone will step in before us." And Florence walked rapidly on, leading the way.

The man followed at a little distance, and when they came to a

neat little cottage under the Hanger, he stepped forward, opened the little garden gate, touched his hat, and departed.

"I am so grateful to that man," said Florrie, heaving a deep sigh of relief. "I hope we thanked him warmly enough."

"You did, at least," replied Caroline, with a smile. "I felt sure I had seen the man before."

They knocked at the cottage door, which was opened by a wholesome-faced woman with an ill-tempered eye. She stared at the two high-bred-looking girls before her, and made a mental note.

"Have you any apartments vacant?" asked Caroline, in her clear liquid tones.

"Yes; a sitting-room and a bedroom, miss. Will you be pleased to walk in?"

"What is the rent?" asked Miss Digby.

"A pound a week, miss, and the money in advance."

"Certainly," replied Caroline, coldly.

Be it remarked in passing, that Mrs. Smith's usual price was ten shillings, but, as she told her husband afterwards: "I am bound to look after myself, you know; and they are a long way out of the common, are they two gals."

As the young ladies went up to their little bedroom, Mrs. Smith bustled about with a good will, and by the time they came down, a bright fire was burning in the grate—for the evenings were growing chilly—and a nice little tea equipage arranged on a small table near the fire.

Meanwhile, the girls upstairs were examining their tidy little room, with much curiosity. At last Florence threw herself into a little armchair near the window, and burst into tears of joy.

"Oh, Carrie," she managed to say, "that I should rejoice so much over this poky little room; but I do—I do."

"It is a hole, certainly," remarked Caroline, "but then it is clean, and it is great fun to be here."

So the girls bathed their faces, brushed their hair, and went downstairs, rejoicing Mrs. Smith's heart by their expressions of pleasure at the cosy aspect of the room. They had ham rashers and eggs for tea—being the only available things—but a fine lady would indeed have been shocked at the amount of food these young women contrived to consume.

Their minds were now at rest, and the fine air blowing over the Hampshire Downs had made them hungry.

While Mrs. Smith was clearing away the tea, Caroline entered on the business of their visit to Selborne. The woman stood in open-mouthed astonishment when she heard of the hop picking.

"Lor', miss, I know 'tis all a joke," she said, with a very red face.

The girls laughed. "It's no joke," said Caroline, but she felt it would be useless to keep up the pretence of being common hop pickers, so she told the woman all that was necessary, and Mrs. Smith agreed to get them some hop picking on the morrow.

"The hop gardens be just round to the left under the Hangers," she told them.

Left to themselves, the girls sat on for a long time in the gloaming by the little window, enjoying the lovely scenery, and full of the novelty of their situation.

"See how the glory is fading, Flo," said Caroline, breaking a silence which had fallen for some minutes. "Does it not seem as if there could be no sickness, no misery, nor death, even in such a peaceful little place as this? nor *crime*," she added slowly, and just at that minute the dark man who had befriended them passed the window.

The next morning was bright and sunny, and the girls, entirely forgetting their troubles of yesterday, rose in dancing spirits to begin their new experience. They made an excellent breakfast, seasoned with light laughter and gay words, and then betook themselves to the hop gardens. The happy sights and sounds of a free country village thrilled them with delight. The crisp, fresh air, the lovely lights and shadows around. Even the distant barking of dogs and cackling of geese, sounded as music to their ears.

As they neared the hop gardens, they heard the murmur of happy voices, the hum as of a small town, and a few steps onward disclosed to them a pretty sight. The gardens were now in full view; there were the graceful trailing vines, the flickering lights and shadows, the blue sky above, the crowd of busy workers; while the gay dresses of the children, as they flitted about from place to place, gave a bright dash of colour to the picture. The women were hard at work, this was their second harvest, but to the children this season was always a happy gala time. There was no quarrelling, no coarse talking, only laughter and happy voices.

"Well, this is Arcadia," exclaimed Caroline, as she began to pick. "What with the scent of the hops, the sunshine and the sweet, fresh air, I declare I feel intoxicated."

"So do I," said Florence, "with this lovely camp life. Oh, who would live in London after this?"

They picked on steadily for a long time, and then with one consent sat down to rest. A long vista of drooping hop vines lay before them, with a peep of blue hills in the distance. Suddenly a tall, loose-limbed fellow in a grey tourist's suit came sauntering down through the vines towards them.

"Oh, Carrie," cried Florence, in a dismayed tone, as he neared them. "Oh, Carrie."

The young man at last caught sight of the girls, and stood absolutely still before them, as if turned to stone. Then he threw out his hand, and said, in a deep concentrated voice: "My God! What is this?"

"Nothing at all, George; or at least, nothing that concerns you," said Caroline, calmly, but with a rising colour.

"George, are you alone, quite alone?" cried Florence, jumping up.

"Yes, Florence; but why?"

"Oh, then I will tell you all;" and hanging on his arm, she turned her sweet face up to his and told him the whole story.

"By jove, but this is glorious," cried the young man; "glorious; take your hand off my arm, or I shall die of laughter."

Then, throwing himself at their feet, he burst into peal after peal of merriment. Florence laughed with him; but Caroline sat very upright, with a flash in her eye, and a look of sternness about the resolute little mouth.

"When you have ended all this insane noise," she presently remarked, "perhaps you will explain your own appearance here."

His laughter died away on the instant, and in his cheek came a dusky red.

"Except for Florrie, I would not attempt to explain," he said, coldly, "for she is glad to see me, and you are not."

"Oh, yes, so very, very glad," said Florence, fervently.

George Temple smiled at her, and then turning to Caroline, he said:

"Miss Digby; my cousin Evelyn, at the Grange, is to be married to-day. Hers is considered a very grand match, and Mr. and Mrs. Selwyn are there at this moment. I cut the concern altogether, and am now on a walking tour."

Caroline was shaken out of her dignity on the instant.

"And we not even asked," she cried.

"It is too bad," responded Florence. "I do love a wedding."

"It is quite too bad," repeated Caroline, slowly; "but there must have been a very strong motive. What was it, George?"

"Well, it was given out that you were knocked up by overmuch gaiety, and did not wish to go. Eve turned very rusty about it, I can tell you. But the real motive I discovered by overhearing accidentally a conversation between the Selwyns. Shall I go on, Carrie? You will be angry if I do."

"Go on," she sharply said, keeping her eyes fixed earnestly on his face.

"The motive then was that Caroline and I should be kept apart; do you hear, Carrie, *kept apart*, and here we have met, all waifs and hop pickers together. Oh, it is too much of a lark, too huge a joke. Oh, if Mrs. Selwyn were to see us at this moment she would fall dead on the spot, I know she would." And again he laughed heartily.

"Do stop laughing, George," exclaimed Florence, "and tell me what she meant about you and Carrie."

He sat up at this, and looked grave.

"Florrie, somehow Mrs. Selwyn had picked up the insane idea that Carrie and I cared for each other. Could anything be wider of the mark, or more preposterous? Caroline and I, of all people! *Caroline*, who has never missed a chance to wound and insult me; who has always scorned and misunderstood me—*always*."

A dusky red glowed on his cheek once more, his eyes flashed, and he hurled the words at Carrie as if they had been blows. Oh, if he could only have known at that instant how she admired him; but it seemed as if he were never to know, and the moment passed.

"I have said," remarked Caroline, "that you were a great lazy fellow, no good in your generation, I have said this many times, and shall probably say it many more. I should be ashamed to have a fine property and let other people manage it, never to see to my tenants nor to my poor people. I should be ashamed of such a life. I don't believe you have ever done one single noble action, or put yourself out of the way to help one human soul."

The young man did not hasten to reply. He lay flat on the grass with his face upturned to the sky.

He considered his past life. Culpably lazy he undoubtedly was, but he could have told Miss Caroline one or two things which would have made her heart glow and the tears come to her eyes.

But he was quite willing that this young woman who was pretending to set up as a Mentor, should misjudge him; let her.

"I am certainly not of much use in the world," he said after a pause "and never likely to be."

"Yes you are, George, the best fellow in the world. It is only Carrie's nonsense," cried Florence.

"It is no nonsense at all," said Caroline, "speak for yourself, George," she went on, calmly turning to him, "do you know I have actually discovered that most difficult problem—to reform the whole world. If my plans were really carried out, the work would be done without strife or tumult."

"Would it indeed?" laughed George, derisively.

"You may laugh but the whole secret is this; let every living soul, each in his own place, do his duty by his own family and those lying just around him. If this were really done, the world would indeed be reformed. These small circles of light would be met by other circles, and the whole globe would be shining with light."

Caroline's face lit up, she looked most beautiful. George glanced at her, and passionately longed to take her to his heart for one sweet moment, with all her enthusiasm, her youthful intolerance, and her ignorance, but instead, he calmly said, "A Utopian idea, quite; wouldn't hold water for a moment."

And then they all three began picking hops in amity, until the golden lights and lengthening shadows warned them to return.

"We can't ask you in because of the proprieties," said Florence, "but we can spend every day together at the hop gardens."

CHAPTER III.

A FEW evenings after this, as Mrs. Smith was clearing away her lodgers' late tea, she begged permission to go and visit a sick friend who lived at some distance.

"I shall be home in time to get your supper, miss, she said, addressing Caroline; "I will make all safe if you don't mind staying in the house for an hour or two by yourselves."

"Not at all," the girls declared, and they rather enjoyed keeping house themselves "something like poor people" as they said. Then Caroline stirred the fire, and they went to the window to watch the golden light fade away.

While they were gazing out, Florence suddenly cried, "Look Carrie, there is that dark man passing who helped us.

"Yes," said Caroline, with a little shudder, "he looks a black shadow."

After this, the light suddenly faded, and the chill twilight came on.

"I am not sure, I quite like being entirely by ourselves," said Florence timidly, after a long silence. "This room looks so strange between firelight and twilight—the very furniture seems altering its shape, and looks mysterious in this dim light."

"Florence, you are a goose," said Caroline, quickly. "Now see me draw down the blind and light the lamp."

Rising to do this, she stood arrested by a curious sound, striking across the stillness of the room.

It was a slight creaking noise, seeming not to come from overhead or underneath, but just at the left side, where in fact there was no room or anything to account for such a noise.

Florence grew white to the lips, and pulling her sister down beside her, whispered: "Don't move, Carrie, Mrs. Smith will soon be here, let us stay close together."

Again there came the strange sound, and louder this time!

Caroline rose to the occasion, she pressed her lips on Florence's cheek and whispered:

"If you love me, keep quiet—perfectly quiet—I am going to lock the door of this room securely, and go into our bedroom to bring down my dressing-case, then here we shall be entirely safe." So saying she softly left the room, and in another minute returned, smiling at the frightened Florence and bearing aloft her dressing-case. She placed it noiselessly on the little table by the side of Florence, and remarked aloud in a clear, disengaged tone:

"Shall I stir up the fire, Florrie? the room will look more cheerful."

Accordingly she bustled about, stirred the fire, lit the lamp, and in the glowing blaze, opened her dressing-case to see that everything was safe—when lo! at that moment, crack, crack, was heard, in the wall, and suddenly, with a fearful crash, down came the wooden

partition, and a man wearing crape over his face stepped boldly into the room.

Caroline gave a violent start, and in her agitation partly overturned her dressing-case, and some gold rolled out on the table, while, throwing herself on the sofa, scream after scream burst from the frightened Florence.

In some strange way Caroline seemed to have lived through this experience before. She stood motionless by the table with her shining gold, and fixed her beautiful eyes sternly on the advancing foe.

"It's no use your showin any of your airs to me," said the ruffian, in a hoarse voice, "I hav'nt followed you all the way from London for naught; I know, all about that hundred pounds; you told me all about it at Waterloo Station; I stood just behind you and heard everything," and he laughed a horrible laugh. "I mean to have the money, so here goes," and he put forth his hand to grasp the gold.

"Touch it if you dare," cried Caroline, in a ringing voice of scorn. "I would never mind giving money away, but I will not be robbed."

"Won't you though, my fine Miss, it will be worse for you if you try to prevent me," and he once more put forth his hand.

By this time Caroline Digby's blood was well up. She came of an old fighting race, soldiers and warriors. She gave not one thought to herself, or to the fearful odds, but she felt in a frenzy of rage with this wretch who could thus steal in, to rob two defenceless girls.

"It will be worse for *you*," she cried, in a clear voice of scorn, and flying at the ruffian's throat like a dog she tried to strangle him. The attack was so sudden, and fierce, and unexpected, that for a single moment she had her way—the next——

"Oh! thank God," cried Florence, with a wild shriek, "George has come to save us;" and, as she spoke, George Temple stepped into the room followed by two policemen.

It was the work of a few minutes only to handcuff and take off the prisoner—then George turned to Caroline. "I have been watching here all the evening; I have seen him skulking round here, after dark, several nights, and as I saw Mrs. Smith leave the house some time ago, I got some policemen, and, by Jove, what a stunning good job I came."

Caroline held out both hands with shining eyes, but what was their horror on looking round, to see Florence lying back on the sofa,

muttering wildly, and now and again strong convulsions agitating her slight frame.

"Oh my God, I have killed her!" cried Caroline, "what shall I do—I have killed her."

"Nonsense, my dear Carrie, she will soon be better, she is only frightened."

The strong manly voice gave a momentary courage to her sinking heart.

At that moment the frightened Mrs. Smith entered the room, and she was instantly sent off for a doctor.

"Meanwhile, Caroline, I will do my best for Florrie," said George Temple, and he began to apply what restoratives were at hand.

Carrie fell trembling into an easy chair, and watched with ever-deepening admiration the tenderness and skill which George Temple brought to bear upon his patient.

After a time Florence seemed to know him, for, clasping his hand, she cried—

"Oh! George, save Carrie, save Carrie, you will not leave us, oh! say you will not."

"I certainly will not leave you, dear child," he answered in gentle soothing accents.

But even as he spoke the girl began to scream and laugh and cry anew, and then stronger convulsions followed, until poor Caroline, feeling as if she were going mad, crept out into the little garden in front of the house, which was now bathed in moonlight, and leaned her aching head on the trellis work by the side of the door.

How softly fell the moonlight! how lovely was the picture lying before her! what a happy world it seemed, except to her!

But here was the dreadful, dreadful truth. *She had killed her sister.*

She to despise George Temple indeed. *She* to talk about the "circle of light." She was a wicked girl, she had dragged her sister to her doom. But, oh, Florrie must not, *must* not die, and then she fell to praying, and making agitated bargains with God, as indeed we are often prone to do, in moments of sudden anguish about our beloved ones, when we are smitten to the heart.

At last she dragged herself slowly in, and behold there lay her darling Florrie in a sweet refreshing sleep and George watching faithfully beside her.

All went well after this, and soon Florence was herself again.

However, a long train of consequences followed upon this night's work, which one day I may relate. The *immediate* consequence was this.

"George," said Caroline, earnestly, as they stood together one breezy sunny morning, in the fair hop gardens, Florence being at a safe distance, "George, I am a wicked, conceited girl. I despised you and everyone. It was simply self will brought me here. Reform the world indeed, it is I who need reform."

He looked at her lovely, ingenuous face, and the tears shining in her eyes and said huskily, "Caroline, you must not be too kind to me, my dear, or I shall make a fool of myself and you will be angry."

"I, angry with you! never again," she cried.

"Carrie, I have loved you all my life" he simply said, his voice trembling with emotion, "Can you put up with such a fellow as I am?"

For answer she put up her sweet lips to be kissed and shyly whispered, "I think that I too must have always loved you, George."

Then there fell a happy silence, but Florence soon returned to share their rapture.

Presently George remarked with a happy smile, "Between us we have about killed Mrs. Selwyn; never mind, it was a glorious day for me when I came to Selborne."

Who Harkens?

(From the Italian of Cavaliere Raffaello Barbiera.)

'Mid lonely, verdant woods, whose ear doth raptly hark
To threnodies of love, sung by the nightingale?
'Mid dusky, leaf-crown'd dells, who careth to remark
The hum of insect-wings, and scent pale flow'rs exhale?
Who lists unto the plaint, 'mid drooping willow-boughs,
Made by the purling brook? or to the wind, which grieves
Like to a human voice, as restlessly it sighs
Amid the hoary elms, on gloomy autumn eves?
How many elegies sad bosoms oft intone!
How many tears are shed, and sighs, breath'd, all in vain!
How many visions bright, ere realiz'd, have flown!
How many hearts are crush'd, yet, nobly, ne'er complain!

(Translated by BARONESS SWIFT.)

Damocles, or the Gates of Janus.

By THEODORA CORRIE.

Author of "IN SCORN OF CONSEQUENCE," "PETRONELLA DARCY,"
"ONLY THE AYAH," etc., etc.

CHAPTER X.

IN common with many other girls, May possessed an almost unlimited capacity for chatter. After her return home, bidding her mother good-night, she followed Henrietta, and throwing herself on a sofa, with both arms comfortably clasped under her head, kept up a running fire of conversation all through her sister's undressing.

"Well, Rietta, and how did you like your first party?"

"Very much, May. I never knew before how kind Aunt Catherine could be; and M. de Brie was charming. He says that I must call him cousin."

May smiled. "I wonder," she said, "if I should ever have been the least like you if I had remained at home? I'm afraid not."

"Never wish to be like me; I have a horrid temper, May. I am always afraid of doing something dreadful."

"So long as you are afraid, you needn't be," said May. "That sounds Irish, doesn't it? Captain Strafford says Irishisms are catching, but I don't mean to grow into a mere reflection of my lover, as some girls do."

"It must be strange to have one," said Henrietta, with a knit of the brows, that was not of an appreciative kind.

"Why, you——" May began, and then paused suddenly.

"What are you thinking about, May?"

"I was wondering what would turn up next," said May, demurely. "As Fraulein Sandkatze used to remark: this life is a most wonderful complication, where the masculine half of creation is concerned."

"Many the things that strange and wondrous are, none stranger or more wonderful than man," quoth Henrietta back at her. "I have been thinking this evening, May, that I should like to know a great many people."

A little touch of wistfulness sounded in her voice. The bishop's wife had repeated her invitation to-night, and everyone had been

most wonderfully kind. The gates of society seemed to be wide open in welcome, but by some strange association of ideas, Henrietta's thoughts had gone off at this minute to the open high road. To Lady Evelyn, seated in a low pony carriage, with a comfortable basket of odds and ends, and a pile of picture papers in front of her, a weekly collection for the navvies and their wives (for by some means best known to herself, the lady of the Manor had won a welcome amongst the very roughest of the workpeople). "I should like to go about with Cousin Evelyn, or with Ted," was the unconscious outcome of Henrietta's meditation.

From under her long lashes, May cast a furtive glance at her sister. Being certain of the one most desirable ticket in her own little lottery, she had no wish to occupy the foremost place in the circle in which she now found herself. Her stay in Godwin's Worthy would probably be of short duration, but the events of the evening had unfortunately stirred that most fatal feminine ambition in her mind—a desire to match-make.

"If you hadn't turned yourself into Paul's private secretary, you might go about as much as you liked," she began. "Why is he at home still? His education doesn't seem to be of much use to him, so far."

"Uncle John is very anxious that he should have a few months' complete rest," said Henrietta. "He suffered from such dreadful headaches before his last exam., and he is hardly free from them yet. Did you hear about his mathematics? The examiner said——"

"Oh, spare me his mathematics," said May, laughing. "I have no doubt as to his ability. You misunderstood me; but he can't repose on his laurels for ever—even if they are evergreen."

"He is always busy," said Henrietta, half amused, half vexed at May's badinage. "He is re-arranging all the Grange library this spring, and Aunt Catherine says he is as good as a secretary. He helps her very often with her charity work."

"Curate's work without pay, that's what it amounts to, I suppose, and it won't give him a profession," said May, a little contemptuously.

"His writing is his profession," said Henrietta, "and some day he will be famous."

"And supposing he never makes a name, what then?"

If May was purposely teasing her sister she failed here, Henrietta looked up with a smile, tender, even a little amused.

"He is not of the stuff that failures are made of," she said. "You don't know Paul. Even as a child the amount of knowledge he had in his head was amazing, thanks to Madame de Folet. She must be a wonderful woman."

"One never hears anything of his French relations," said May. "It always seems ridiculous to me that the subject is a tabooed one."

"I have heard," said Henrietta, "that Paul's mother died very young, and Uncle John can't bear her name mentioned."

"Well," said May, "if I died young I shouldn't care to be swept into oblivion as if I were a family skeleton. But as for this book-making," reverting to the first subject, "it may turn out well, and he may become a great author, but half the time literature is only another name for becoming a stupid book-worm, or a confirmed dawdle."

With her mother's example before her, some allowance must be made for this speech.

"Paul will be a celebrity, not a dawdle," said Henrietta.

"It is a great thing to be believed in," said May, with a laugh that had something mocking in it.

"It almost seems to me that you dislike Paul," said Henrietta, hesitatingly.

"I shouldn't dare to say so if I did."

"Some things go without saying, May. Tell me. What has Paul done that you should be so put out with him?"

"You will be put out with me if I attempt to explain matters."

"I don't mind if I am," said Henrietta, more than ever convinced of her sister's unreasonableness. "I want an answer to my question."

"Oh, well," said May, "have your own way, then, only don't blame me. I have no patience with Paul because I consider that he takes up your time in a singularly selfish manner. The best of brothers may become a bother if they are too much spoiled; and you are always playing to him, or tidying that wretched old attic. I grant that he may be a genius in disguise, but he has no right to tie you down to work for him. He may be blind too, but all the same it is very hard on Ted."

"Hard on Ted?" said Henrietta, in an amazed voice.

"Why, yes, Rietta. I think Paul singularly thoughtless where Ted is concerned." She rose as she spoke, took up her candle, and

moved towards the door with a curious mingling of impatience, apprehension, and mischief in her eyes. "Really, you might be eight years old, instead of eighteen," she went on. "You ought to have found out long ago that he is hopelessly in love with you. Any girl might think twice before she deliberately snubbed a man like Ted. Of course I should wish you to have a season in town, but——"

May's little speech was never finished. Astonishment and some other feeling had hitherto kept Henrietta in a state of bewildered silence, but now the spell seemed broken. Just such eyes of startled indignation May had never seen before. The next instant she found herself swept into the passage, and the door bolted in her face.

An exclamation of mingled amusement and remorse escaped her lips. "At any rate I have done it," she thought, "and though things never turn out quite to order, which is very tiresome of them, it was really absurd that Henrietta should go on like a babe in the wood any longer. Now that I have once put the knowledge of Ted's affection into her mind, if I am not very much mistaken she will have no power to banish it. I have my suspicions about Paul, but it is a matter of supreme importance that Rietta should suspect nothing where he is concerned; and no one can say that I have not done my best to give Ted a fair start. Brotherly platronics are all very well, but they are apt to be dangerous in the long run. If Henrietta is angry she will get over it, and some day she will be grateful to me for what I have done to-night." Having reached this conclusion, May went comfortably to sleep, never guessing that on the other side of the closely bolted door, Henrietta was crying bitterly. Frightened at her own anger, smothering the tear storm as best she might in the pillows of the old four-post bed.

"We were all so happy before," she whispered to herself, "and May has no right to say such things to me; she has no right. Paul is my brother, and will always be, and I will work for him and play to him just whenever he likes. As for Ted, I won't let May spoil everything with her nonsense; for it is nonsense, and I will never think of it again." Words easier spoken than carried into effect.

A good deal of the child lingered in her nature still, but this evening's work had introduced a new and disturbing element, a sudden tide from an unknown sea, coming into the river of her daily life.

The future might hold more golden hours than the past; yet never again would Henrietta's footsteps wander so securely within the gate of the unconscious paradise of her girlhood. An inward voice whispered to her even now, that May's assertion would demand some other answer in the coming weeks than forgetfulness.

CHAPTER XI.

"PATRICK will be here to-day!" This was May's first waking reflection.

She had slept peacefully as an infant, and was half way through her dressing, before even a thought of Henrietta occurred to her mind. An unmistakable black bruise on her plump arm came as the first reminder of last night's proceedings. She looked at the little mark with a smile. In olden days she had often declared her sister's anger to be worth rousing, since any outburst was apt to be succeeded by a state of penitence impossible to May's own shallower moods. This morning she had no apprehensions where Henrietta was concerned. An inward feeling of surprise therefore shot through her, when the door presently opened, and the subject of her thoughts entered, looking anything but meek or remorseful.

Henrietta's head was held fully an inch higher than usual, only the pink spot on either cheek still bore traitorous witness to last night's tears. She carried a bunch of cowslips, and a handful of yellow Austrian brier roses, newly opened this morning, and the first breath of summer entered with her.

Turning half round from the dressing-table, May held out one hand.

"Oh, Hetty, how lovely! I haven't seen such flowers for ages: but how wet your dress is dear."

"It's an old print, May, it won't hurt. I have been in the meadow, for I thought you might like some cowslips to wear with your brown dress, and the briers will look nice on your mantle-piece."

"What a scent they have," said May, "just like ginger. I shall cut a lot after breakfast, and fill the Nankin china bowls with them."

Henrietta hesitated, then said: "There are hardly enough out

yet : besides, I never put any downstairs now. I have noticed that Uncle John can't bear the smell of brier roses."

"Oh, but that's nonsense, Hetty. He isn't subject to hay fever."

"No, it's not that," said Henrietta, with an instinctive lowering of her voice, "but Sophie told me once, that Grandpapa and Cousin Evelyn's sister both died the last week in May. Sophie said that it had been an extraordinarily warm spring, and that the brier roses were all coming into bloom at the Chase a fortnight before their time, in a way they have never done since, till this year. And on the morning that Grandpapa died, and that the bad news came from the Grange, she remembered so well going into the library where Uncle John was sitting. He asked her to shut the windows because the scent of the briars made his head ache. He had meant to go to the Grange the night before for a small dance. Aunt Catherine always used to come down for the races, and make up a house party, and it used to be a very amusing week : but that evening, after dinner, Grandpapa said that he felt ill, and he begged Uncle John to stay with him. Papa and Mamma went to the dance, and Mamma had a great bunch of Austrian briars which Uncle John brought her just at the last minute for one of the cousins, Sophie couldn't quite remember which : you know Uncle John was always so fond of them both." Henrietta made this last remark in all innocence, much as she would have said that she was very fond of Paul, but at that moment May's face lit up with a sudden eager curiosity.

"Uncle John couldn't have been equally fond of both the cousins," she said, acutely. "I would give a great deal to know the exact destination of those flowers. If they didn't go to Cousin Evelyn then something that has puzzled me a good deal lately is accounted for. I never can imagine why Uncle John hasn't migrated to the Chase again long ago. It would be a most suitable marriage in every way. Nature cut him out for a rich man originally, and he has had to play the part of a poor one quite long enough, only men are so dreadfully stupid where their own affairs are concerned. But of course if he really cared for Cousin Ethelyn, and took her death to heart, that may account for his going abroad directly after Grandfather's funeral, and leaving the sale of the Chase to an agent. I have heard Mamma say that he hardly gave her time to pack up, unless that is the polite way of mentioning that the creditors were

in the house. I believe my respected Grandfather made ducks and drakes of the property. All the same Uncle John has had plenty of time to get over half a dozen love affairs in the last twenty years: and people who have been in love with one sister very often console themselves by marrying another. Now, Hetty, don't begin looking daggers at me again. I will be very proper for the future, and I certainly won't put any brier roses in the hall, or in the study. The less Uncle John thinks about them the better."

Henrietta flushed, then she said, "I came this morning partly to tell you that I am sorry I was so violent last night, May."

The voice did not sound like contrition, but May wisely ignored this fact.

"Never mind about last night," she said, graciously. "If people play with fire they must expect to be burnt. I never knew before how strong you were. You left your mark on my arm if you like to look at it."

At sight of the black bruise Henrietta felt shocked, but the next instant her penitence vanished before the mischievous expression on her sister's face. "I am sorry for your arm," she said, and the apology was uttered with the air of a princess, "but if you have something to forgive, May, so have I; and if ever you try to talk to me again as you did last night, I shall hate you." Laying the flowers on the table, she vanished.

Never was flag of truce offered in more hostile fashion. As the door closed May laughed outright. "Poor Hetty," she reflected, "It's a shame to tease her. She will never be sensible: but she's a regular darling for all that. These cowslips are lovely, and the very thing for my dress." Having reached this eminently satisfactory conclusion, May tucked the flowers into her belt, and ran downstairs singing. She was particularly polite to Paul, even offering him a button-hole from her posy, which he accepted. Possibly he had watched the picking of that very bunch of cowslips from the attic window. Her satisfaction with things in general was not shared by Henrietta, who felt not only uneasy, but guiltily conscious of Captain Strafford's figure looming in the near distance. If he did come, she would have nothing to do with his visit. Her feelings had not yet fully recovered their natural balance, and in company with her uncle and cousin, she took herself off after lunch for a ramble, much to May's secret, though unspoken, vexation.

Lady Evelyn, Captain Strafford, and Ted arrived soon after three o'clock, well armed with all the necessary paraphernalia for sketching. Godwin's Rest was far-famed historically, and architecturally. All the people in the neighbourhood who could draw, and many of those who could not, for that matter, had at various times asked leave to perpetuate the old place, either by pencil, brush, or photography : and though Mrs. Godwin was as tired of the pictured merits of her present home, as ever the Athenians were of Aristides, she had given assent to Patrick Strafford's request for the very good reason that Ted would be one of the party.

From the group gathered in front of the house this afternoon May's figure detached itself with brilliant effect. Her brown bodice had been discarded for a scarlet silk jersey, which vividly set off her fair skin and golden hair. Patrick might have been satisfied with the greeting which he received, but he was not so well pleased with what followed it.

In obedience to much advice he seated himself on an iron bench on the first terrace facing the house, and there set up his easel, while Evelyn, after a few minutes talk with her hostess took possession of a chair some ten yards away, by the old sundial.

With a black lace scarf over her head, Mrs. Godwin had established herself temporarily in the conservatory. She seldom sat out of doors, and this afternoon detained Ted at her side, nominally to ask some advice about one of her parrots. While a list of the bird's small ailments was being detailed, May took her stand just outside the conservatory, leaning against one of the door-posts, absorbed, apparently, in a narrative, not one word of which could Patrick catch. His bench would easily have held a second person, but May seemed to be in a teasing mood and kept deliberately at a distance.

At the end of half an hour when she disappeared altogether from sight inside the greenhouse, a smothered exclamation broke from his lips.

"What's the matter, Patty, are you in difficulties?" asked his cousin, rising and coming to his side, in order to inspect the rival sketch. An expression of genuine surprise, quickly followed by one of suppressed mirth, dawned upon her face. Instead of the view of the house, the canvas only showed a speaking study of a single figure, in a scarlet cap, and jersey.

The dialogue following this discovery was necessarily low toned.

"I don't see much sign of the house, Patrick."

"One must have some kind of foreground, Evelyn."

"This picture looks as if it were going to be all foreground, doesn't it?"

"Faith! and it looks like it. I forgot the house altogether. Better luck next time."

"In the meanwhile do you think that I have any right to bring you here under false pretences?"

He parried her question with another. "What sort of a person is Mrs. Godwin?"

"I never talk about people in the same parish, Patrick."

He looked dissatisfied. To tell the truth, there had been just a shade of good humoured indifference in Mrs. Godwin's manner this afternoon which he mentally resented. Immediately after his arrival she had twice allowed his remarks to pass unnoticed, her attention being taken up by some speech of Ted's; and Patrick was not accustomed to be treated with as little attention as a piece of furniture, even by a pretty woman. Certainly she was wonderfully handsome, he thought, with her classic features, long white throat, and undulating movements: but it seemed to him that her hands—slender and taper, with their long minutæ fingers—gave the lie in their restlessness to the languor of her bearing, while the heavy lids, down drooped over a pair of beautiful brown eyes, had a trick of lifting themselves at unexpected moments.

Perhaps he was prejudiced, but this afternoon he came to the conclusion that she would hardly be a pleasant person to have a battle with: nevertheless, being of a self-confident disposition, he rather looked forward to a possible struggle, in which he fully intended to come off victorious. If only May would not stay in that hot conservatory.

As if in answer to his wish, fate proved suddenly kind. Just when he had begun to despair May reappeared, announcing that her mother had a headache, and was about to take a siesta. If Mrs. Godwin fondly imagined that Ted would devote himself to May for the rest of the afternoon, she was mistaken. True, Evelyn had returned to the sundial by this time, and was now sketching imperturbably, but Ted joined her almost immediately, leaving to May the task of criticising Patrick's supposed view. Whatever the nature of her judgment it was easy to see that it gave a good deal of pleasure to the person most concerned.

Henrietta, Godwin, and Paul coming by and by round the corner of the house, found themselves caught before they were aware of the presence of visitors. Henrietta's first impulse tended to flight. She had meant to keep out of the way; but after a two hours' ramble, all recollection of the expected guests had temporarily slipped from her memory. Ted was already half way across the dividing space of lawn, and she knew herself trapped beyond hope of escape.

With both hands full of flowers, with her hat hanging over one arm, and hair slightly ruffled by the wind, "she stood a sight to make an old man young," and the little air of hauteur in the bow with which she acknowledged Patrick's hearty greeting did but enhance the charm of her unlooked-for appearance.

In company with Paul she moved straight on, and ensconced herself by Evelyn's side. Ted and his two dogs followed her, with an air of open satisfaction, which would have startled Mrs. Godwin could she have seen it.

"Where have you been hiding yourself?" said Evelyn, with whom Henrietta was a great favourite.

"We have been for a walk in the woods, Cousin Eve."

"What to do there?"

"Uncle John and I have been talking, and Paul has been in a brown study—or rather in a green one," said Henrietta, smiling.

"My cousin is going to be a second Shakespeare some day," May announced, presumably for Patrick's benefit. "He cherishes that modest ambition before anything else."

Paul laughed. "I don't go in for castle building on quite so large a scale as you suggest, May."

"Oh, well," said May, "I am rather fond of building other people's castles, and my own too, and I like to do things handsomely if only in imagination."

"I wonder what sort of a palace you would build for yourself," said Patrick.

"I should like to be a Princess," said May, "and to be the best dressed woman in Europe, and to travel all round the world in a yacht of my own."

"By yourself?" he asked softly.

"You forget, there would be the Prince," she said with a charming smile, nodding her pretty head the better to give emphasis to her words.

Patrick bit his lip. "Wouldn't a journey all round the world with only one Prince in attendance be rather a bore. Don't you think it would be better to make up a party while you were about it?"

"Is a husband a bore of necessity?" asked May sweetly.

There is no accounting for human nature. Patrick was irretrievably in love, and she knew it, but a born coquette will play with affection, as a cat plays with a mouse, though oddly enough May's coquetry was no more truly spontaneous than her sister's natural unconsciousness. Seated on a cushion placed on one of the steps by the sundial, Henrietta was busy stringing daisies together, leaning her back against one huge mastiff, while the other crouched at her feet. Ted on the grass a little farther off supplied the materials for the chain, his companion taking the flowers with mechanical fingers, while all the time her thoughts were busier than her hands.

John Godwin leaning against the sundial was mentally taking stock of Patrick Strafford. Dressed in a well-fitting suit of hideous checks and wearing a pair of boots with wonderfully pointed toes, Patrick remained happily unconscious of his host's scrutiny. Finding this world a pleasant place to live in, so far, he was accustomed to be welcomed wherever he went. Where money matters were concerned his open handedness was proverbial. He was the richest man in his regiment and the active promoter of dances, concerts, theatricals, races, and gaiety of all kinds. "Patty pays," might have been the pass word among his more impecunious brother officers, whenever their share of an entertainment assumed alarming proportions. He certainly encouraged extravagance, and he prided himself on his social capacities. Nothing came amiss to him from the compiling of a menu for a big dinner to the selection of the newest waltzes for a ball programme. There was no harm in Patty and much good nature: he lived on the surface of life, and carried his character legibly written on his sunburnt good-natured countenance.

"Looks an honest young fellow," John thought, "not overburdened with brains, I should say. May will twist him round her little finger if he happens to lose his heart to her. Looks rather as if he had lost it already. I wonder where Miss May learned to flirt?" Conscious of something exasperating in the girl's last speech, and having taken a liking to the pleasant faced Irishman, he came gallantly to the rescue.

"Well," he said, "if to be a princess is your idea of happiness, May, I wonder what Henrietta's would be as a contrast?"

"How do you know that it would be a contrast?" asked May, with a shade of malice, her game of cat and mouse being threatened with interruption.

John laughed. "Suppose Henrietta declares herself."

"My ambition," said she, gaily, "oh, it is an impossible one. I want to be Mozart, and Beethoven, and Chopin, and Bach, all rolled into one. Failing that I would give a great deal for a pair of wings: I want to fly far afield. I am not like Paul."

"How do you know what Paul is like?" said May.

"By knowing what he likes, May; I read four lines yesterday which seem made for him," and, still smiling, she quoted:—

"Je n'aime que les fleurs que nos ruisseaux arrosent
Que les prés dont mes pas ont foulé le gazon
Je n'aime que les bois ou nos olseaux se pos-nt
Mon ceil de tous les jours, et son même horizon."

This sally provoked a general laugh. Paul's love for Godwin's Rest had almost passed into a proverb among his relations.

"What's the best thing in the world, Paul; home?" asked Evelyn, momentarily suspending her pencil, and looking at the little group as if she thought it even better worthy of attention than the house itself.

"The best thing in the world? Something out of it, I think," he quoted back.

"It's much better to want the possible, instead of the impossible," said Ted, making an onslaught on a fresh bunch of daisies. "I once read a good story of a man who went round the world in search of contentment, and found that virtue waiting for him on his own doorstep when he got back."

"But it wasn't there when he started, was it?" asked Henrietta, slyly. "Home is the best place to rest in; but don't you think that everybody wants to run before they make up their minds to sit still?"

"I don't feel inclined to run anywhere at present," he said, contentedly. "You are a very unsociable set of people in your ideas. May wishing to travel with only one prince in attendance, and you only wanting wings for company. Evelyn, while we are about it, what is your definition of ambition?"

"That it is something that lures most people into strange places, Ted, and leaves them there."

Patrick laughed. "Ambition lured Ted into a mews yesterday. All because he had promised me a week's fishing with an impossible fly."

"The fly isn't impossible any longer, Patty. I only need a little help to keep my promise. You know," Ted went on, "there's been a queer fly on the water for a week or more, and the trout won't look at anything else. A 'ginger quill' sort of a fly, or it's first cousin, a shade longer in the body, and yellower in the wing; and I haven't been able to match it in any of the tackle shops. I was in town yesterday, and I met young Sands, Beauty Sands they call him, and he asked me to lunch with his people in Queen's Gate. You don't know him, Eve, but he's the sort of young fellow"—with a benignant side glance at Patrick's feet,—“who wears boots a size too small for him, and puts scent on his handkerchief. He will grow out of it all some day, but just now the disease is at its height. Well, we were turning out of Mansom Place when I saw a cock at the entrance of a mews, and there were the very light hackles in its tail the exact colour of that fly. Of course I went for them."

"My dear boy, you didn't!"

"Oh, yes I did, Evelyn: it was an athletic cock, too, took me twice round the mews before I caught it. I only wanted two or three feathers, they were quite loose ones, and really the bird was too bewildered by that time to realise what had happened. A young groom turned up next who seemed to look upon me as in the light of an escaped lunatic. However I soon made that right, but the cream of the joke lay in Sands' behaviour. He really was more upset than the cock. He walked on as if we weren't acquainted. It was splendid to see his face at lunch, when I told Lady Sands. She laughed till she cried: and now, Hetty, if you will be kind enough to tie me a couple of flies before to-morrow, I shall be grateful."

Suspending her chain, stopped by a sudden lack of material, Henrietta looked at him laughing, while heedless of the general merriment, he produced some light hackles from an old pocket book, and handed them over to her.

"Can Henrietta tie flies?" asked May, regarding her sister curiously.

"Why, yes, May, of course I can, Cousin Evelyn taught me."

"I used to tie a good many flies years ago," said Evelyn half to herself, and then all of a sudden she blushed, an inconsequent blush that would not have disgraced a girl.

John Godwin, standing at a little distance, let his eyes rest fully upon her face for the first time that afternoon. There was a light wind blowing and her hair being of the mutinous order, she had long since discarded her hat, in its place tying on a handkerchief, the better to draw in peace. The improvised head gear, happened to be of a violet shade which set off her fair colouring to perfection, and despite her precautions the busy wind had loosened the love-locks on her forehead. All unbidden, why did some old association long since banished force itself back upon John's recollection. A deep sigh escaped him, and Evelyn heard it: she turned her head, and their eyes met.

At this moment the library window opened, and a man-servant made his appearance.

"That means a caller," said May. "Well, Jeremiah, who is it?"

"I couldn't undertake to say, Miss May, but its a French gentleman, and Mr. Champion Proser, and the Mistress desired me to ask the ladies to come in to tea. The hot cakes is cooling, Miss," he added in a confidential aside. Jeremiah was an elderly and eccentric individual, and a privileged person, formerly John's soldier servant, and now the family butler.

"In consideration of the hot cakes we will come in," said May rising. Her move served as the signal to the rest of the party. With unconcealed alacrity Patrick put up his drawing. It had advanced so slowly during the last hour he would evidently have to come again to finish it: but Evelyn had completed her sketch, and now sat looking at it through one screwed up hand, the better to get an effect. The study was a clever one, including an angle of the old house, and the front of the library window. It might have contented anybody, but her expression scarcely denoted satisfaction. With the little flush still on her cheek, and the loosened rings of her hair lying against the edge of her handkerchief, there was something of the first freshness of summer in her whole appearance,—a freshness which always seemed a part of herself, suggestive of roses. John drew nearer, and looked over her shoulder, unbidden. "You have just hit it off," he said. "Let me help you with your materials."

Though his one hand was a serviceable one, he lingered excusably over his task and the rest of the party were already disappearing into the house when Evelyn said suddenly :

"Will you come and dine with us on Thursday, and keep May company?"

"I am afraid I must say no to that, Evelyn. I never go to dinner parties now, unless Aunt Catherine wants me."

"It isn't a dinner party exactly, John, unless you call May and the Mortimers company : we expect no one else."

He hesitated, then uttered the first excuse that came into his head,—unluckily a bad one.

"I don't like to break a rule when I have once made it."

"Do you think after all these years I don't know that : but some rules have exceptions, John, and cousins are surely different to strangers. I," here she hesitated herself, "I did not mean to bore you."

The little touch of pride in the usually gentle voice startled John. He moved uneasily, a sense of discourtesy and of churlishness suddenly attacking him.

"I beg your pardon," he said eagerly. "Indeed you are quite mistaken. Don't you know that you are the last person in whose company it would be possible to be bored?"

"I suppose by the rule of inverse proportion that that is the reason why we see so little of you at the Chase," she said. "I shan't repeat my invitation unless I know what you are going to say to me beforehand."

"Suppose that I thought I ought to say no?"

"Do you always do what you ought? On that supposition I won't ask you."

Busy at the moment untying her handkerchief and replacing her hat with her face half hidden, it was difficult to tell if she spoke in jest, or in earnest. The words were suggestive of mischief, but he could not help fancying that she winced as she uttered them. For some reason best known to himself, despite his eight-and-forty years, a momentary madness took possession of John, and prudence went to the winds.

"Suppose just for once that I am a sinner," he said tentatively.

"I shan't suppose anything for the next few days but that you are coming," she said.

She had gained her wish, and he knew it, and man-like, the moment after yielding to temptation he began to be vexed with his own weakness. The others had gone before them through the open French window, and Evelyn was about to follow, when a long branch of a climbing rose, stirred by the wind, caught in the lace wound round her throat. With a startled exclamation she drew back, trying vainly to get free. John coming to her assistance, noted the unusual pallor of her face.

"It is nothing," she said, a little faintly, "only the scent of the briars takes me back so many years."

"Poor roses!" he said, dryly. "They used to be one of your favourite flowers. Hadn't you better let me hold the branch steady while you disentangle your scarf?"

"They are my favourite flowers," she said, "only the scent of them reminds me of Ethelyn, and of that night when I found her with your roses still in her hand, John. They were never moved. I had left her so pleased with them, and with your note, and then when I came back——"

She paused here while he said in an absolutely expressionless voice, "So that was what became of the flowers that I sent you."

"You forget," she said, half bewildered, half hurt by his manner. "I am speaking of the flowers that you sent to Ethelyn, not to me."

"I forget nothing," he said, slowly, "I am speaking of the flowers that I sent to you by Laura. I never in my life sent any to Ethelyn."

Low, intense, concentrated, the tones of his voice carried with them instant conviction. For a moment the house, the greensward, the sky, spun round giddily before Evelyn's eyes: then, woman-like, she was the first to recover some outward semblance of self possession. "Your flowers never came to me," she said, "Laura must have misunderstood you."

The bough that John was still holding snapped suddenly short off in his hand. "I see," he said, half under his breath. "I understand—now."

At this moment it never occurred to either of them to suspect Mrs. Godwin of any deliberately malicious action. They knew her real character too well by this time: knew her to be one of those absolutely self-centred people who can never be trusted to take a message, or to remember the contents of a letter correctly, simply

because they are only unable to bestow a fraction of their attention upon any outside matter. Open malice often works less harm than this intense—possibly unconscious—selfishness: one can guard against the first, but where the second touches us only the bitter experience of long years can teach the art of self-defence.

Now, in a moment, as these two stood together before the study window, with the branch of golden brier between them, the curtain let down so many years ago was once more raised, and the fresh grouping of the scene that presented itself, utterly at variance with the conception of all that had gone before, was so startling in its possibilities, in all that it seemed to demand, that the principal actor could not for the moment adjust himself to his part.

The overture was playing to a fresh act, and John felt that he needed time to pull himself together before he dared accept a new rôle, say rather, adapt from his old one. Love and penitence tugged at his heart, and pride, and the bitter consciousness of his own poverty bade him ask what right he had, save the right of an arrogant fool, to assume that a note and a bunch of roses thrown into the scale could have made one feather weight of difference where General Thorne's suit was concerned. He might have asked that question of the girl of seventeen. It seemed many years too late to ask it now of the woman whose gentle courtesies he had always stemmed with a cold negative. The old sweet past starting so unexpectedly into sight only mocked the heartache which he always carried with him. It should be buried again with no outward show of weakness, or self pity. There was nothing else to be done; and yet, if it had been to save his life, John could have found nothing to say during the next few minutes. He could see nothing but the long spray of roses, one end of which he still held: he only conscious of Evelyn's white fingers leisurely detaching the thorns from her gown: presumably she was waiting for him to speak again. The garden was very still and very sweet, and the sound of the unseen waterfall came softly through the trees. The silence between the two seemed to have continued an incredible time, when John said at last, in a voice scarcely as indifferent or as steady as usual:—

"Laura was always a heedless messenger. Fortunately the matter was one of little consequence. I think we had better go in, Evelyn. They will be expecting us, and I know that you have a prejudice against cold tea."

Was she a witch, he thought? Could she read the thoughts the eager words not allowed to pass his lips, while he uttered that one commonplace suggestion?

True, she entered the house without speaking, but before letting go of the blossoming branch that had torn her scarf she picked a couple of the golden buds, and slipped them through the lace at her throat. The action was so natural, so easy in its superb carelessness, that it defied criticism, but it raised a storm in John's heart, and very nearly wrecked his self-control. After all these years had he betrayed himself at last to his own undoing? Surely if she had been indifferent to him all along, his own numberless little coldnesses must have left some sting behind them. Pride and poverty swore him to silence, but it was his turn to suffer if she held his heart at her mercy and chose to exact a penalty. He, who had been so self-possessed, whose manner had always shown cool indifference, now found himself bereft of appropriate speech, and this afternoon it might have been veriest schoolboy who followed Evelyn through the long passages. If revenge is sweet she might have tasted it then, but John could not see into her heart. Desperately occupied with the outward maintenance of her own self-possession Evelyn only experienced a sense of relief that for once he had lost the art of making polite conversation.

The face turned upon him as he opened the drawing-room door for her, wore just its usual smile; nothing more or less. The ancients did well who gave to the Sphinx the face of a woman!

CHAPTER XII.

WHILE Evelyn and John were in the garden, Mrs. Godwin had been very happily occupied with her other visitors, or rather with one of them. Tea, always another name in this establishment for coffee and chocolate, was quite an institution at Godwin's Worthy. May, having taken temporary possession of the coffee pot, of Mr. Prosser the rector, of Ted, and Patrick Strafford; the other caller, M. de Brie had seated himself by his hostess, and looked very much at home there. Mrs. Godwin, dressed in her favourite velvet gown, held a crimson silk fire screen in one delicate diamond-ringed hand while the fingers of the other played with the fringe. This after-

noon she talked with more animation than usual. "Do you remember?" is the password of old friendship, and in former years, before her husband's blue eyes appeared upon her horizon, calling out all the dormant romance in her nature, Laura Salviani had always been taught to regard the Count as her future husband. He was twenty years her senior, a matter of small importance in the estimation of her parents, and she had been on the brink of a betrothal when young Godwin first made his appearance. As a young girl she had always felt a little bit afraid of Armand de Brie, and to-day, as he sat recalling old reminiscences and making her laugh, he also gathered up with skilful unnoticed fingers the old rein of an authority which in former days had never been questioned.

Henrietta, disliking Mr. Prosser particularly, took refuge by her mother's sofa, listening to M. de Brie's talk with the same sense of growing fascination that had possessed her on the night of the dinner party. She paid no attention to an animated discussion going on at the tea table, between Patrick and the rector with regard to fortune-telling and private theatricals, and was surprised when the Count turned to her, enquiring with a smile if she were fond of acting.

"Paul and I used to be very fond of acting fairy tales for our own amusement," she said. "We never had an audience. The dinner party was very like a play to me the other night: I like watching other people's faces."

"Society on a large scale is always a play more or less," he said, "and, on a small one, more often than not it is like charades. The people who guess the most words get all the prizes, and pay fewest forfeits. Consciously or unconsciously we all take some rôle. When I was young myself, little cousin, I was always eager to play a leading part, and I made plenty of mistakes. Now," he went on musingly, "I hardly care to appear in public except at long intervals, and then only when I have a benefit night. But it amuses me to try to determine beforehand what parts other people are cast for. My intuitions come true just sufficiently often to satisfy my vanity. I will make a guess at your past, and prophecy your future, if you like, *mon enfant*."

Henrietta shook her head. "The past belongs to myself," she said, "and as for the future, I don't want to know what part I may have to play then: it would spoil everything. It would be like dipping into the third volume of a book before one has read the first"—a

shade of wistfulness came into her voice as she added: "I wish, though, that you could prophecy some leading part for Paul or Ted to play."

He looked down at her now with a curious sense of hesitation at work in his mind. "It is not fair to know too much of the past if one sets himself to guessing the future," he said. "I knew Madame de Follet very well in former years, and later on I had the pleasure of her daughter's acquaintance. She died very young, and her face lingers with me like a portrait detached from some old picture gallery, reproduced again in her son. It is not well to live too much in the memory of the past, for then it is apt to infect the present. If I were such a portrait myself I would endeavour to live in the future—short of that I would turn my face to the wall for the sake of other people," he added. But this last remark was made in too low a voice for Henrietta to catch it. "As for your other friend over there," he went on, indicating Ted with an almost imperceptible gesture, "he interests me very much, because he has begun where I always intended to leave off if I had not been too much of an idler. He has taken the part of prompter, and if I am not mistaken he will keep to it too. Many people are too selfish to apply for it or not sufficiently impersonal. They get fatigued too speedily. It won't fatigue him. He will never bring himself to take half as much interest in his own affairs as in the concerns of other people. His attitude is an enviable one, depending a good deal upon natural temperament. You remember the old saying: "The best recipe for happiness is to trouble very little about one's own interests." Very few people can play that part *con amore*, or keep it up sincerely, with gracefulness."

"But you," said Henrietta, who had caught a touch of sadness in his voice, "you yourself must have some part to play, surely?"

(To be continued.)

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“Forbidden.”

By HELEN F. HETHERINGTON,

Part Author of “PAUL NUGENT, MATERIALIST,” “NO COMPROMISE,”
“LED ON,” etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXXII.

FLO TO THE RESCUE.

THE two years and more that passed over the bronze coloured head of Flora Vivian since her last visit to London, made a great difference in her. She was quite as pretty as ever and as charming; but it was as if time had laid a weight on the butterfly's wing, which had served to steady it. She was more attentive to the fussy Colonel, more patient with the exceedingly unfussy Mrs. Wentworth, and though she could not refrain from chaffing the Bishop's chaplain wherever she came across him because of his imperturbable gravity, she went about occasionally in a subdued and serious manner, as if she herself had some idea of the deeper meaning of existence.

She came into the morning-room, one bright November day when every beech and chestnut in the woods outside were waking up into the full glory of their autumnal beauty by the radiance of the sun, with an expression of great resolution on her young face. “I am sure that something is up with Beatrice,” she said, as she sat on a stool at Mrs. Wentworth's feet, for she meant to wheedle Aunt Carrie into consenting to the plan which she had hatched during the night, so it was well to be nice to her at the beginning. “Nobody has heard anything of her for ages.”

“I don't think she ever wrote very often,” Mrs. Wentworth said placidly, as she went on with her knitting.

“Oh yes, Auntie, don't you remember how we used to roar over her letters? They were so intensely funny.”

No answer, for a stitch had dropped, and the search for it was more interesting than anything else to the Colonel's wife at the moment.

"Do you know what I've resolved to do?" resting her soft chin on her hand, and summoning all her courage. "I am going to see her by the next train."

"What? going up to Town?" exclaimed Mrs. Wentworth in some consternation, though she still pursued the stitch with persistent zeal. "May I ask if you expect me to go with you?"

"Not in the least. I am going alone."

"Have you asked the Colonel?"

"No, because he has driven into St. Christopher's, and he won't be back till too late."

"I can't allow it," shaking her head. "If there is one thing more than another against which I set my face, it is allowing girls to go about everywhere without so much as a maid to take care of them. Your uncle will be going up before Christmas—you must wait till then."

"I can't wait another hour" the girl exclaimed, in breathless eagerness. "I shall be back before you know that I am gone. I can't invite myself to stay—but you will send my things directly, if I telegraph, won't you? there's a dear?" coaxingly, as she jumped up—prepared for instant action.

"But, Flora, listen to me." Mrs. Wentworth had not yet recovered her stitch so that she could not give undivided attention to the subject. "You are much too young, but if you must go, Stimpson shall go with you."

Stimpson was an antiquated maid who shared her services between the elderly lady and the young. She happened to be suffering from a violent toothache, so Flora was able to reject her company on the score of humanity, and as she eagerly protested that her blue serge, black jacket trimmed with Astrachan, black hat with black feathers, formed such a quiet and unassuming toilette that no one would glance in her direction, and stifled her aunt with so many kisses that she forgot all her objections, she carried her point, and started off in triumph. It was as we have said about two years and a half since she had last stayed in Curzon Street, and it puzzled her exceedingly to find a reason for the fact that she had received no second invitation. Whenever Beatrice came down to St. Christopher's

she seemed just as affectionate as ever, in fact she appeared to cling to her more and more as if she were in real want of a sister. Flora had enjoyed her visit most thoroughly. If she had not been quite so pretty, Lady Crosby would have been delighted to take her about, but Millie was too astute to chaperone a girl who might deprive her of her own admirers. Lady Malvern, however, came to the rescue, and as she had the entrée to every house in the best set, the girl went everywhere on the crest of the topmost wave. Society laughed to see her sweet young face with the freshness of the country upon it, side by side with that of the withered world-worn old lady, and Townshend-Rivers said it was like a poem with the beginning and the end on the first page. Lady Malvern had allowed Mr. Forrester to pay some attention to Miss Vivian, because she considered him as one of the most promising young men of the year, and the two young people fraternised most cordially. That time was now so very long ago, and men forget so easily! Probably there would be as much difference between the Val Forrester of this November and that June, as between a man at the breakfast-table and the same individual the evening before. Every girl who has stayed in a country-house knows what a wide chasm divides them. As to Val Forrester, Flora had to be left to her own imagination entirely. He might be in Persia or South Africa for all she knew to the contrary, and yet, with the hopefulness of youth, she looked out of the window of her cab with eager eyes, expecting to see him somewhere about as soon as she reached civilised regions. Of the Falconers she had heard a good deal by side-winds, for Colonel Wentworth often threw out dark hints about the Earl when he returned from an occasional visit to his club. She knew that Aunt Judith's cheerfulness deserted her as soon as Beatrice's name was mentioned, and she had heard something about a letter which the Bishop had written to his daughter entreating her to endure all things rather than create an open scandal, which sent the Colonel into a whirlwind of fury. As he paced the morning-room to work off the steam, he appealed excitedly to his wife.

"If I behaved like that thorough-paced scoundrel—you would soon send me about my business, wouldn't you?"

"I don't know, dear. Perhaps you wouldn't go."

"Wouldn't you divorce me like a shot?" returning to the charge, though it was like belabouring a feather-bed.

"What an extraordinary question to ask me! But you are not—a scoundrel, so I really cannot say," skilfully evading the necessity of a decided answer.

Flora had listened with a burning sense of wrong in her heart. It seemed as if there must be something very awry in the management of the world when such a girl as Beatrice was wedded to a monster. Why didn't he die as so many of the noblest and best of England's sons were being carried off week after week by an attack of influenza, or a disaster at sea, or in Africa? She could not imagine that anyone on earth would regret him, and yet here he flourished like any green bay-tree, as if on purpose to worry other people.

The cab stopped at Lord Falconer's town residence, but when she was let in, if it had not been for Simmons' familiar face as he stood in the hall, flanked by two smart foot-men, she would have thought that she had come to the wrong house. Certainly there was the usual broad staircase, which she had always admired, just in front of her, but to her surprise she was led through a side-door which she had never noticed before, to another staircase of much smaller dimensions. She followed Simmons, with her mind in a state of perplexity to the top of the first flight, and then down a long passage, till he threw open a door, and she saw to her surprise, the gold-coloured draperies of the boudoir.

Beatrice was seated with her back to the door, writing a letter. Flora saw her turn her head languidly, with grave eyes, seeking the cause of the interruption; but when she discovered who it was, she literally bounded from her seat, and with a cry of delight, clasped her visitor in her arms. "You dear thing, where have you sprung from?"

"From home. I felt obliged to come—Bee, why have you never written?" searching her face with eager eyes, for the confirmation or refutation of her fears.

Beatrice, contrary to the habit of most women did not seem to appreciate the pleasure of being looked at. She turned away, and presently drew Flora to the sofa where she could sit with her back to the light. "Where are you staying, you little fraud? You came up to see me, and somebody else as well? Confess!"

"I'm staying nowhere—here this morning, gone this afternoon" longing to be contradicted.

"You came up for the day?" in surprise.

"No, only for a fraction of the day. Oh! be quick and tell me everything—it will be gone in a minute."

"Are you very keen to go back?" thoughtfully, as if she had many things to consider as she asked the question.

"Not so very," Flo answered veraciously, as she flushed slightly. "But there's a very good train at 3.50," she added in a hurry, so as not to angle for an invitation.

"That isn't a very convenient time. How are the two Benevolencies?" Turning the subject in an exasperating manner, before she had quite decided it.

"The Benevolencies are both Excellencies in the way of health, but how's the boy? And how did you get on at the Grange?"

"The Grange is detestable," with a shudder. "A prison planted in the middle of a desert. I had a lively time! The boy is enormous. You shall see him directly he comes in."

"Dear little darling! Is he like you?" Flora asked, with great interest, though she was longing for Beatrice to talk of her own doings, and to tell her the secrets of past years. At last, after discussing the child's wondrous beauty, and his original ways, she burst out "Bee, there isn't much time—and it's about you I want to hear. Don't treat me like an outsider, there's a duck—I'm so desperately fond of you," and putting her arm round her neck, she gave her a convulsive hug which expressed a volume of affection.

Beatrice let herself be kissed passively. Her lips trembled, her eyes remained downcast. She was evidently deep in thought, whilst Flora sat by her side chilled, and bitterly disappointed, wishing that she had not been so demonstratively affectionate as her appeal was to meet with no response.

The minutes were flying fast: soon there would be luncheon, after that perhaps, visitors, and almost immediately she would have to start for her train. She wished she had taken Mrs. Wentworth's advice, and stayed at home, for it was evident that Bee did not mean to confide in her, as her adopted sister. A feeling of great loneliness stole over the poor child. Having no relations of her own, except an uncle far away in Ceylon, the friends who had given her their love so freely were especially dear to her, and Bee Kennard had been her idol from the the first. Now she remembered vividly that she was an orphan, a lonely little girl with no possible claims upon anybody, and although she was the light of the Went-

worth's home, and the worthy couple could not have got on without her, she began to fancy in this moment of dejection that nobody wanted her, and that if she caught cold on her way back and died before the end of the month, nobody would miss her over much. The corners of her pretty mouth dropped, her eyes filled with tears; when Beatrice suddenly raised her head and looked at her strangely, "I don't know whether I'm doing right or wrong, but I'm going to keep you. You can't guess how I have longed for you"—her voice breaking, her hands clasping Flo's convulsively, "but I did not dare to ask you."

"Oh, if I had only known. I wouldn't have waited a minute," Flo cried eagerly, all her chilled feelings thawing in a moment.

"But you don't know what you may have to face," slowly.

"And I don't care so long as I'm with you," undauntedly.

"Am I right, I wonder?" looking about her with sombre eyes.

"I don't care," repeated Flo, prepared to go any lengths in her enthusiasm.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A WIFE'S EXPERIENCES.

HAVING sworn Flora to secrecy, Lady Falconer began to pour out the history of her married life during the last two years, and a pitiful story it proved to be. Her own face grew whiter with disgust and shame as she went through some of the indignities she had suffered, but Flora's cheeks waxed red with the fierceness of her indignation, and her eyes flashed fire in the intensity of her sympathy. The revolting details of the Earl's private life, his wife kept to herself, and only revealed as much as was absolutely necessary to make her own story clear and coherent. When he had tried her patience beyond what she considered its reasonable limits, she wrote to her father to propose that she should give up her home in Curzon Street and take up her abode at the Palace. It was then she received the letter which made the Colonel so furiously angry. Her father implored her to think of his position as the shepherd of so many souls, and rather to endure all things than cause a scandal in the Church. If she parted from her husband, and came to live under her father's roof, all sorts of reports, damaging to her character, would be spread by

malicious tongues ; and how could he ever lift up his voice to urge a wife to remember her wifely duty, without somebody raising the cry, "Look at home—you allow your own daughter to forget her marriage-vows. Make her go back to her husband, before you come and preach to us."

"It was hard—too dreadfully hard," Flora said, in a low voice, with a choking feeling in her throat.

"He was quite right, I could not see it at first. I absolutely thought he didn't care," with surprise at her own folly. "But after that he came up, and I saw that his dear old heart was nearly broken. He spoke to Falconer sternly, and tried to shame him into promises of amendment. He told him that if I continued to live in his house, he must solemnly engage not to molest me in any way ; I must be free to live as much apart as if I were under another roof."

"Is that the reason of another staircase ?" Flo asked, with a sudden intuition of the truth.

"Yes, I had that door made in the hall before my father left London, and whilst Falconer was to a small extent under his influence. I ordered smart carpets for the back stairs, and had the bannisters renewed so as to be more presentable. My father also told him that I must be free to receive any friends I may choose to have, as he had reserved for himself unlimited latitude. You know that Geoffrey Talbot was forbidden the house ? So it was necessary to make a stand. Hugh would have been the next, only he never comes, so there was not the smallest excuse for telling him to keep away."

"But, Bee, dearest, what had Mr. Talbot done ?" Flora asked, in an awe-struck tone, as if she thought he must have been guilty of some dreadful enormity.

"Nothing—absolutely nothing. He only put on an air of devotion as he always does with every woman, and Falconer chose to be absurdly jealous," Beatrice answered, scornfully. "I got as red as a peony the last time I saw him, and he must have thought that trouble had turned my brain, for he was quite too utterly foolish. He began to talk of affinities, and I thought the brougham would never come. But I must not waste time talking of that nonsense," she broke off with an impatient sigh. "Flo, if you stay here you must be prepared for anything," looking at her with solemn eyes.

"I'm not afraid of anything," she answered brightly, wondering what the warning could mean.

Lady Falconer shuddered inwardly as she thought of some of her past experiences. There was a time when, assured of her own indomitable pluck, she would have said that she was afraid of nothing, but not after several years of matrimony with a man like the Earl. She had faced him boldly, even when nearly mad with passion, and yet he had taught her what fear was. It was only the direst necessity which had reduced her into slipping into her own apartments like a discredited interloper up the back stairs, to turning one of the largest bedrooms into a dining-room where she could have her meals in peace, and, perhaps worst of all, to meeting her best friends in other people's houses because she did not dare to ask them to her own for fear of what might happen before they left. One night, or rather morning, she came home from a ball in Devonshire House, where she had been acknowledged as the Queen of Beauty, and surrounded by the flattery of ardent admiration. The strains of the last waltz—perhaps the words of the last whisper—were in her ears, as she crossed the threshold of her own home; and Simmons, as he looked at his mistress with respectful but admiring eyes, thought that all her former brightness had come back to her, for she looked like the girlish bride of a few years before. The next moment, the door of the smoking-room opened, and out poured a drunken crew, with Falconer at the head of them. Simmons said afterwards, that he should never forget the change in her face. As her husband came up to her, with an uncertain step, and a coarse allusion to her personal charms, and she met the insolent eyes and heard the insolent murmurs of the other men who were standing between her and her only means of escape, she drew herself up, and gathering her wrapper close over her pure white neck, and beautifully moulded arms, threw a fierce glance of indignation and scorn first at her husband, then at his friends. She looked so queenly standing there in her splendid dress with the Clifford diamonds flashing in her dark hair, that the Earl was cowed for an instant.

"Clear the way!" The words rang out in her bell-like voice, in which there was not the slightest tremor, as she gave the order, haughtily, and as Simmons moved forward promptly to execute it, the men fell back instinctively.

"D— your pride," Falconer called out, as soon as he had recovered himself. "You might show some civility to my friends."

But Lady Falconer had already gone, knowing that it was only

by her own quickness and decision that she had saved herself from the disgusting scene which her husband had prepared for her. Captain Lester, "who had an eye for a fine woman," as he said of himself pretty frequently, felt particularly aggrieved at the Countess's prompt disappearance. He perched himself on the bannisters, and began trolling out the words of a popular song in a passable tenor, as an appropriate serenade; the other men lounging about, some on chairs, others on the stairs, joined in, and Dick Winter went back to the smoking-room to fetch the hanjo which he generally brought to a convivial gathering. Falconer listened in drowsy delight. This was certainly a novel way of annoying a wife who would not come down to his level, in spite of all the pressure he had brought to bear on her. He could imagine how she was raging as song followed song, and the old-fashioned clock in the hall struck four in the midst of a boisterous chorus. It was a rare joke to have these jolly fellows smoking, drinking, singing with all the free and easy ways of a music-hall, whilst his straight-laced wife was sulking upstairs. In order to prove to her that he was neither under the government of a Bishop nor a petticoat, when the morrow came, he showed no penitence and made no apology.

After this episode, Beatrice in her fierce disgust came to the conclusion that life would be simply impossible if exposed to the chance of a repetition, and took her measures accordingly. She doubted if it were right to bring an innocent, light-hearted girl into the midst of such unpleasant surroundings, but in her complete loneliness she had hungered so desperately for one loving heart to which she could pour out the terrible burden of her troubles, that she *could not* let her go. Flora Vivian she knew to be true as steel; whatever passed before her eyes within the doors of that house, would never be brought forward as food for gossip. She would treat her friend's secrets as she would her own, and keep them buried in her breast. But her wholesome imagination could not conceive the trials through which she might have to pass, and Beatrice felt almost as if she were taking an unfair advantage of her innocence by allowing her to stay. This feeling prompted her to say, "There is one thing, I know you are afraid of—a tipsy man. Falconer sometimes takes too much," she added in a low voice, her head drooping with shame at the confession.

Flora bravely hid the disgust she felt, and answered stoutly, "I

think I ought to *live* with you, instead of only staying a week or two. You must have somebody to take care of you, and I'm better than nobody."

"Better than anybody," cried Beatrice, with effusion. "Oh, Flo, I shall never be able to let you go. I'll telegraph at once for your things." And she got up to put her resolution into effect immediately.

Flora was delighted at having attained her object, but felt utterly miserable about her friend. She could not see any hope for her future unless her big Herculean husband should chance to die, and somehow with his strong frame, and robust health, such an event did not even seem to be within the range of practical possibilities. It was even probable, as no one can stand still as to vice or virtue, and moralists always tell us that we must deteriorate if we fail to improve, that he would grow more vile and brutal as the years passed by. It was a terrible prospect, and she was weighed down with the horror of it. Just then, the handle of the door by which she had come in, was violently rattled, and she nearly jumped out of her seat. To her surprise, for she only thought of Falconer, Beatrice flew to open it. There was a diminutive figure on the threshold, as she held up the golden-plush portière—a child with great black eyes, and cherub mouth, looking like a snowball in his white furs. With a shout of laughter he sprang into his mother's arms, and as Flora saw her clasp her boy to her breast, she knew that if there was the dark shadow of sorrow on one side of her path, on the other there was the light of an infinite happiness—the love of a mother for her child; and it was like a bright sunbeam bursting through a suddenly opened shutter into the darkness of a room. There was this hope for Beatrice after all. If her husband tried to make her bankrupt in happiness, her little son might pay off all claims long before he attained his legal majority.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

MAJOR MORTIMER TAKES A TONIC.

COLONEL WENTWORTH was inclined to be quite tempestuous when he heard that his ward had taken flight to Curzon Street. He very nearly started for town, in order to fetch her back, but he remembered his dinner, and as the *ménu* was according to his liking, forgot his

grievances in the enjoyment of its consumption. He proposed to go the next day, but his wife reminded him of his magisterial obligations, so he put off "his raid into the enemy's country," as he called it, till the following week, and on Monday morning an attack of gout developed itself with the utmost thoroughness. He threw the whole blame of it on Lord Falconer's unconscious shoulders, and swore at him mentally, for half an hour at a time. His line of argument was rather oblique—Falconer was a scoundrel, because he was a scoundrel he made his wife unhappy, because she was unhappy, Flora thought it necessary to fly to her assistance, therefore Falconer was the prime cause of the girl's presence in Curzon Street, when he ought to have been the strongest reason for her absence. The colonel consigned him, without remorse, to a place as hot as his own right foot, but Flora still stayed away. He wrote to her short letters as pungent as cayenne pepper, but her answers were as soft as Turkish Delight. He commanded her to return, but she asked him what he would have thought of himself if he had deserted a comrade in trouble; and as many years before, he had won the Victoria Cross by saving a brother officer's life under specially dangerous circumstances, he found this question too difficult to answer. He dropped argument like a sensible man, and very unlike a woman, as soon as he found it going against him; and when the Bishop thanked him most heartily for allowing his ward to take compassion on his daughter, he dropped his opposition as well as his argument, and ran up to town to tell Lady Falconer that she might keep the child as long as she was any comfort to her. If his intention had been to insist upon carrying his ward off in a cab, he would never have had the heart to do it, after one glance of entreaty from Beatrice's magnificent eyes, for the old soldier lost all his powers of resistance when face to face with lovely woman. It ended in his placing himself entirely at her service, offering to come up directly if ever she wanted a staid old fellow to take care of her, or to do any business for her. He even went so far in his enthusiasm as to promise that he would stay in town for several weeks, if it would be any comfort to her to have an old friend close at hand.

Beatrice was touched by his kindness, and large tears came to her eyes as she thanked him: but she told him that by letting her have Flo, he was doing her the greatest kindness, and she could not deprive Mrs. Wentworth of every member of the household. At

the mention of his placid wife, whom for the moment he had quite forgotten, the colonel took up his hat and departed, feeling truly thankful, as he walked down Piccadilly, that Beatrice had been wise enough to decline his offer—and that Mrs. Wentworth would never hear of it. Oh, the slips that would not matter if Rumour did not generally trumpet them abroad till they were sure to reach the ears they were not meant for!—The promise made in the rashness of excitement, scarcely accepted perhaps by the other, but overheard and repeated by the one who had the prior claim to the man who made it—a mere trifle at the beginning which assumes enormous proportions as vast as a South African river at flood-time, and drowns the happiness of two lives. We should be afraid to raise a finger, to say a word, to move a step, if we thought too much of the consequences of action, and yet if we do not think enough of them, we shall get many sound raps on our knuckles before we have lived a week.

* * * *

Lady Crosby was in low spirits. It was Major Mortimer's wedding day, and though she had given him up long ago, and they had both grown tired of their flirtation, it made her feel as if he had deserted her; and she was afraid lest her own particular section of the world would jump to the same conclusion. As soon as Sir Digby returned, she thought it prudent to turn the cold shoulder on the Major, but when the erratic Baronet started again on his travels, and she began to wish Mortimer to come back, he was so slow in answering to her call, that she suspected at once that he was under the partial control of another influence. She came upon him in the Row, walking by the side of a tall Australian girl, with gold in her hair and nuggets in her pocket. He was with her again at Hurlingham, and she heard "the barbarian," as Millie called her in her jealousy, ask him if she might not have a shy at the pigeons herself with her own rifle some other day, if she remembered to bring it with her. She imagined her stalking into the enclosure with her gun over her shoulder instead of a sunshade, and the infatuated major following close at her heels, looking like a shy proprietor of a startling show. Papa seemed to be always round the corner, or mamma on in front just on purpose to leave these two in everlasting *tête-à-tête*, and Lady Crosby, as was to be expected, commented on this laxity with stern severity. After that she saw them on the river in a boat, whose elegant proportions left no room

even for the most attenuated of chaperons—the girl sculling with all the power of her well developed muscles, the man lounging on the cushions, his eyes fixed in lazy fatuity on the wild, fresh beauty of the face which the sun had kissed, the wind had swept, but on which the worn stamp of the world had never been set. Looking at Eve Derringfield, the London Beauty felt as if she were as old, as lined, and as withered as the Marchioness of Malvern herself; and she flew to her glass as soon as she reached home to see if she had not acquired a batch of wrinkles round about her clear blue eyes. But no—she looked—and was comforted. She was just as charming as ever, only Morty had the jaded tastes of a man who has long been about town. He had seen enough of crowds in ballrooms or theatres night after night, he had risked asphyxia in heated atmospheres, and there was evidently something refreshing to him in the contemplation of a beauty which spoke to him of fresh air blowing from the hills, of wide, open spaces, of grass land, where there was ample room to breathe, where the horses were as untamed as the men who rode them, and life was as free and unfettered as the clouds that raced before the wind. The Major was anæmic, as we all are more or less in these days of high pressure, and the Australian girl was just the sort of tonic he wanted. So he made up his mind to take her; and the important feat was to be carried out at St. Paul's, Knightsbridge: and his old love, feeling very cross had made up her mind to look on.

On the way she called at Curzon Street, to show off her new frock, and air her own pretended satisfaction and indifference, and to beg Lady Falconer to accompany her to the ceremony. Beatrice declined with thanks. Weddings made her feel positively unhinged. She could not help wondering, whenever she was dragged to one, if the man would develope into a monster, and the bride into a martyr, and she felt as if she ought to cry out and stop the proceedings. But she only said that she was busy, and proposed that Lady Crosby should take Flora instead, and the girl hurried away to put on her things, intending to make herself as smart as she could in order not to be hopelessly cut out by her companion.

"I watch you with unflagging interest," Milly observed in a thoughtful tone, as she picked up a fuzzy white wool lamb belonging to "the boy," and began stroking it abstractedly, "for I cannot be certain how you will develope."

"Do you mean that I am getting too fat?" Beatrice asked, with an amused smile. She always found Millie most amusing when she was in one of her quasi-serious moods, and she could see by the sideways pose of her head at the moment that she meant to be impressive.

"If I were writing a book about you, I should make you either a friend or a saint," she went on reflectively. "There's no middle way for you—you must be in extremes."

"I don't see why."

"Of course not. If you did, you would make a point of being different. May I speak quite plainly?" looking deprecatingly over the lamb's back.

"Just as plainly as you always do."

"Well, then, if I were Lord Falconer's wife I should snap my fingers in his face, flirt with *every* man I came across, be just as wild and wicked as he himself, and go to perdition, but down a prettier path than his. I should, indeed," she ended up, with a defiant nod.

"You wouldn't, Millie. Two things would save you—your self-respect, and your conscience," Beatrice said quietly, speaking out of her own experience, for sorely had she been tempted to be as reckless as the wind.

"Self-respect would be a vanished quality, and conscience would have to shout through a speaking trumpet if it would be heard. But as I was saying, if you weren't one thing you ought to be the other, by all the rules of logic."

"Logic has nothing to do with women. But what do you mean?" leaning forward, with her dark eyes fixed on the fire, and a sort of indulgent smile upon her lips, as if she were humouring a child.

"I mean this," sitting up, and clasping her hands round her knees, "you ought to be a saint, dressed in shabby alpaca, with no cut about the sleeves; you ought to spend half the day in church; you ought to give into your husband with pious resignation; you ought to lie down meekly like a mat to be trampled under foot. Then you would go to Heaven some day, and get compensation; but as it is, you are miserable in this world, and I don't feel so very sure of the next," shaking her head.

"There's nothing of the mat in me," Beatrice exclaimed, as she threw back her head. "I can't give in; I must hold my own. I won't yield one inch, if I die for it."

"Quite right, dear," jumping up with alacrity, and dropping her solemnity in a moment. "Have your fling, and enjoy yourself. That's my advice. I shall keep Miss Vivian to tea if I may."

"But what are *you* going to do?" Flo asked, as she stood in the doorway, buttoning her gloves.

"Stay at home with Cliff, for a treat. He isn't quite the thing."

"I suppose you know that Geoffrey Talbot is to be Morty's best man?" Lady Crosby asked, with a twinkle in her eye. "He came over from Paris on purpose."

"I know nothing of his movements," gravely, but with a slightly heightened colour.

"Shall I tell him something of yours?" Without waiting for an answer, she blew a kiss to her, and calling to Flo to follow, hurried away to the wedding. She heaved a sigh, however, as she stepped into her brougham, and thought of many occasions on which "Morty" had been the other occupant of the carriage. He could not well be her companion on the way to his own wedding, but she chose to feel ill-used, and regretted that she had not brought some fascinating man with her, instead of that prosaic entity, "a female friend."

CHAPTER XXXV.

LADY MALVERN CHANGES HER MIND.

BEATRICE sat by the fire till long after Lady Crosby had departed—thinking. There was some truth in her careless words, after all, for as she analysed herself and her position, she acknowledged that the only way to make her life complete was either to be, as Milly put it, broadly, a fiend or a saint, and she was neither. She could not abandon herself to a wild way of living and find the happiness outside her home which her husband made impossible for her within its desecrated precincts, for her religion was a fact, and not a myth or an abstraction, to be believed in on special occasions and forgotten on every other. On the other hand, she could not meet insult with silent meekness, ill-usage with tacit resignation, or tyranny with slavish obedience. Her heart constantly throbbed with fierce resentment, her spirit rose in indignant protest, her pride was always up in arms, and her whole being was often in a state of the wildest revolt. The love which she had felt for her

husband when her eyes were blinded to his defects died out as soon as she saw them revealed in all their hideousness, and had nearly merged into hatred. There was nothing in her of the bruised, broken-spirited wife, who when dragged against her will into a police-court, refused to give evidence against her brute of her husband who had knocked out her teeth, and kicked her poor suffering body to a jelly—because after all “he was her mate, and she kinder loved ’im.” She could wrap herself in her pride, and steel herself to laugh and joke and seem as lighthearted as any of the girls she met in society, but there was no resignation in the depths of her heart. She could not force herself to do anything but shrink most palpably from his rare kiss, because it was absolutely loathsome to her. Her boy saved her from becoming hard and defiant, for she could lavish on him the wealth of tenderness with which her heart was naturally overflowing, and perhaps he saved her from a lower depth—the lower depth into which a neglected wife too often falls in a search for love at any price. Society watched her with expectant eyes. It seemed so unlikely that with no one to protect her, and with everything to goad her on, she should still walk with head erect and eyes looking neither right nor left, amongst a crowd of admirers, seeking for no softer consolation than that of her own rectitude; and yet she was no cold-blooded statue, with a heart of marble, for one glance at her face would tell the most careless that she was full of life, and impulse, and feeling—a woman to the very tips of her fingers. She could not understand that what seemed to them a hot fire of temptation was no trial to her. She had been brought up in the pure and wholesome atmosphere of a refined home—where society scandal was not allowed to defile her young imagination, and the most recent elopement in high life was not treated as the best joke out. Her husband had certainly opened her eyes without any delay to the wickedness of the world, but she had shrunk back at once in bitter loathing and disgust, and it had not tended to make her lax or coarsened her ideas of woman’s ways.

A basket of Neapolitan violets was brought in as she sat by the fire, lost in meditation.

“He has not forgotten me, nice old fellow,” she said to herself, sure that they came from Geoffrey Talbot, as she buried her face in them, and drank in their sweetness with exquisite enjoyment. One bunch she placed in the front of her dress, and then, being roused

from her reflections, she was just going to ring for "the boy" when Lady Malvern was announced. She came in, looking like an old picture in a dark green velvet pelisse, bordered and "caped" with sable, her grey hair carefully curled under the broad brim of a large plumed hat, an umbrella with a big gold crook for a handle serving as a stick, and her sharp eyes travelling round the room taking in the Society paper lying on a side table, and the basket of flowers on the Countess's lap, at one glance.

"Humph! Covent Garden is a trifle to this room," she said, sniffing up the fragrance, but looking as if it were a nasty smell. "Where do those come from?" pointing with her stick to the violets as soon as she had kissed her niece, and subsided into a chair.

"From Mr. Talbot. He never forgets his friends."

"Thought he was safe in Paris."

"He has come over for Major Mortimer's wedding."

"Bad excuse better than none—has he been here?" sharply, with her eyes fixed on Beatrice's face, in order to surprise the slightest sign of emotion.

"No, he never comes—Falconer does not care about him," she said with re-assuring carelessness. "Would you like to see the boy?"

"No—I want to talk to you." In spite of this assertion, the old lady remained silent for some time. Unknown to Beatrice she and her wrongs had been the theme of every tongue in what calls itself "the smart set," during the last few days, in consequence of a paragraph which had appeared in the columns of "Audacity." Proper names were suppressed but everyone knew who were the hero and heroine alluded to as a "Nobleman and a Houri," whose carefully hidden escapades were thus dragged into the merciless light of publicity. A kind friend showed it to the Marchioness, who read it in a blaze of indignation, and ordered her carriage at once.

"My dear," she said in a low voice which was actually tremulous, "it is no use going on any longer. You *must* give him up."

Beatrice looked at her in great surprise. "Give him up, Auntie, how can I?"

"You've done your best—and I've done mine. But it is no good shutting our eyes to the fact that it was hopeless from the beginning. The Cliffords are doomed to go down like the sand in an hour-glass—and an Angel from Heaven couldn't stop them. You've had the

pluck of a Gordon—but you see those wretches out there were too much even for him. He mistook his little stick for Aaron's rod, and thought he could work miracles with it; but we're too bad to have any miracles worked for us now-a-days, and if they were, we should explain them away by electricity or hypnotism, and not turn a hair at the greatest of them. But I'm wandering from my point—divorce him, my dear. You have my free consent," tapping on the floor with her umbrella.

Beatrice was thunder-struck, knowing that the old lady had set her heart on Falconer's reformation, and regarded married life as his only chance of salvation. It was an enormous sacrifice for her to make—for it implied the blasting of her dearest hopes—the public proclamation of their failure. And it put the stamp of open shame upon the family name.

"I can't, Auntie," she said, gently, for the idea gave no shock to her feelings, "I took him for better, for worse."

"And you've had him for worse, and never for better. He hasn't kept to the rules of the game, so you must send him off like a cheat. My dear, I've worried about you," a tear actually dimming her bright eyes. "I haven't been able to get a bit of rest for thinking of you. It has aged me before my time (this at seventy-five!) and I can't bear it any longer. Let him go"—throwing out her hand with a gesture of the bitterest contempt. "He isn't worth a thought, or a struggle. He has made your life a hell—and you might have been so happy!" she ended with a half-choked sob, as she thought of all the misery she had brought on this innocent girl through her criminal silence at the time of her engagement.

Beatrice steadily refused to divorce her husband; entreaties, arguments, and protestations had no effect on her. Lady Malvern offered to take all the expense of the suit upon herself as a sort of expiation for her part in the marriage; in fact she was ready to pay any sum, and take any trouble in order to get rid of the burthen on her conscience. She told her that her husband was the talk of London, that other people's husbands had begun to doubt if they ought to allow their wives to go to Lord Falconer's house (which was probably an exaggeration.) She maintained that every copy of "Audacity" containing that paragraph about him, had been sold out in two days; and that Beatrice would be looked askance at if she were ~~an~~posed to tolerate his scandalous conduct. It was necessary to

make some public protest, and the only way to do it was to ask for a divorce. She went away at last after a long and agitating scene, still determined to have her own way, and confident of victory before many weeks were over. That estimable nephew of hers was sure to play into her hands, and make life under the same roof with him positively unendurable for his wife. Beatrice was the most head-strong, wilful girl she had ever come across, but she knew of one person who was still more so, and that was Horatia, Marchioness of Malvern.

As soon as the old lady had departed, Beatrice flung herself face-downwards on the sofa. At that moment, the bitterness of life seemed to crush all the courage out of her usually brave heart. She writhed with the pain of unendurable shame. The cup of pain was full to the brim, and she felt as if it would choke her. She clenched her hands, and bit her lips till the blood came. Her husband the talk of the town—a by-word of reproach even amongst the careless men of the world—his evil-doings put in print so that all might know of them, the cruel eye of public curiosity turned upon the secrets of her home! Could she go on with it through youth and middle-age—through all the interminable days of her healthy young life, till she lost the power of suffering through constant habit, and sank into the sleepy soulless apathy of deep despairing misery? Lady Malvern in the excitement of strengthening her own case, had let out everything that she had carefully kept back during the last two years; and Beatrice knew for the first time that her wrongs had become a public scandal. She had not seen that obnoxious paragraph till the old lady caught it up, and showed it to her, in order to emphasize her point, and now, she would never forget it. The words seemed to sear her feelings with a hot iron; she felt as if time could never obliterate the scar. And people laughed at these things! She seemed to hear the mocking laughter ringing in her ears. The poor deluded wife, the husband who made such a fool of her—would be the wonder and the joke of men at their clubs—the women at their gossipy five o'clock teas! She hid her face still deeper in the cushions—oh! if she could get away from herself—her shamed, degraded self, and from everyone else as well. She groaned aloud in the “*sturm und drang*,” of her tormented mind, and the groan was answered by a half-suppressed exclamation. There was someone in the room! She started up, and pushing back her hair

looked curiously into the gathering shadows, with an instinctive shiver of disgust as she thought of her husband. But no—the room was very dark because the fire was so low—but she could see that this man who was standing just beyond the Persian rug was of quite a different stamp.

“Mr. Talbot!” she exclaimed, with a deep sigh of relief, as a small ray of fire-light fell upon his well-groomed person.

(*To be continued.*)

A Question of the Hour.

By H. B. NEDHAM.

IT is a curious fact that the great stumbling block in the way of arriving at any practicable solution of the problem of Imperial Federation is precisely the same difficulty which damned Mr. Gladstone's plan for granting Home Rule to Ireland. A scheme giving the Nationalists representation at Westminster whilst denying English, Welsh and Scotch members all vestige of control in Irish concerns, seemed dangerous, and on the other hand to exclude the sister-island from any share in the Imperial legislature seemed equally illogical. It is just so with the many proposals which have been mooted for according to our self-governing colonies, a voice in matters affecting the Empire as a whole in trade or war. The difficulty which Mr. Gladstone found “it passeth the wit of man to overcome,” was instinctively felt in the case of Irish Home Rule to be an unsurmountable one, for the adoption of the Nationalist programme was a step towards disunion. In these circumstances, even Hibernian approval of Federation would appear as cynical as the reply of the younger Dumas to an advocate for the abolition of capital punishment, when the witty novelist said “*que messieurs les assassins commencent!*” The Nationalists would gladly favour a federation scheme on the Home Rule all-round principle, starting with the United Kingdom, and there is absolutely no getting away from the fact that not only would this involve a complete

reconstruction of the constitution, but in the eyes of three-fourths of the Irish people, would be regarded as a triumphant advance towards separation.

Federation, however, as patriots at home or in the colonies look forward to, would be a tremendous strengthening of the bonds linking the component parts of the Empire on which the sun never sets. It would, moreover, offer to the world a front which might well make the grandest combinations of foreign powers pause before giving vent to long pent-up jealousy and the desire to rend that realm asunder. The solution of the question looks like one of the near future; for the Imperial idea has grown from being merely the generous dream of a handful of patriotic enthusiasts, into something of a definite shape and meaning, which given effect to will have mighty influences on the destinies of the Anglo-Saxon race. The colonies, in a word, desire no weakening of the ties binding them to the mother-country, and would hail any proposal for Federation coming from her, as the Canadian Premier, Sir Wilfred Laurier declares it must come. There is not a single individual in those far away communities, unless he be of the little Englander type, who would wish for a moment to utilise such a system for interfering in the local concerns of the United Kingdom, but there are millions of them who justly think that the time has come when the great self-governing groups of Canada, South Africa, and Australasia a generation or two back—the puny nurselings of Downing Street, now the sturdy giants of Greater Britain—should have some voice in affairs which may mean so much for good or ill to their development as commercial communities in peace, or their safety from aggression in a possible war raging in the four quarters of the globe.

Here again is a curious reproduction of the military side of the question which presented itself in such a formidable aspect in the case of Irish Home Rule. Look at it how we like, or account for it as we best can, there is no getting away from the fact that Ireland is in the strikingly anomalous position of being the one solitary portion of the Empire which has no volunteer force. Not a single company or battery of our third line of defence exists in Ireland. In the proud martial display of Jubilee day, no citizen soldiers from Ireland were present when contingents from our remotest possessions lined the route. She sends none to compete at Bisley, and an

"Irish Brigade" is an unknown factor among the 30,000 volunteers in training at Aldershot. The concession of Home Rule, however, would logically be followed by the embodiment of volunteers in Ireland, with the probable enrolling of every able-bodied male. And then?— Given an alliance of some of the great military powers, with their navies once united to attack our colonies and commerce there would be Ireland's opportunity. In the last century, with our American kinsmen and half Europe in arms against us, Ireland had volunteers, and seeing her opportunity in England's extremity, she used it with alacrity. The existing anomaly is a disagreeable one to account for to the inquiring foreigner, but it is a fact all the same, an ugly feature which shows how much more stern realities weigh in practical statesmanship than sentimental theories. But with regard to the participation of the colonies in military and naval matters the difficulty is not one of danger to England, but rather a problem as to the most effective way of organising for Imperial purposes, the forces they have at their command already, and which are bound to be factors growing with the growth of the colonies. The plain English of it is that Ireland is too near us for a risky Home Rule experiment, and the colonies are too distant for any other condition of existence to be thought of for one moment except separation. Ireland again is geographically an unsafe quarter for us to allow of the maintenance of a standing measure to the unity of the Empire—a loaded pistol constantly held at the head of John Bull—and until the present condition of feeling is altered by the great physician, Time, the anomaly we have pointed to cannot be done away with. But the very thing which, in Ireland, would be an acute peril, in the colonies becomes a valuable safeguard in the worst of possible eventualities. No English Government could tolerate, come what may, the separation of Ireland, but not a shot would be fired by us to hinder the voluntary secession of a single self-governing colony.

If precedents be sought for in connection with constitutional changes which may be deemed little short of revolutionary, they are by no means wanting, although some of them are very little known. Under Henry the Eighth, Calais received the privilege of representation in the English Parliament nearly two hundred years—if we except a brief experiment by Cromwell—before Scottish members first sat at Westminster, and more than two hundred and sixty before the

Irish Act of Union, of 1800. In the middle of the last century such a plan was seriously proposed in the Lower House, as a remedy for American discontent, and Benjamin Franklin was allowed to state the claims of his fellow-countrymen before the legislature of Great Britain. Again, within recent years, the delegates of Newfoundland were similarly heard in connection with the Fisheries dispute with France. It may also be mentioned that some of the colonies of France and Spain are represented by deputies at Paris and Madrid. A conspicuous example of federated government exists in the Dominion of Canada, and a like system is in process of formation in the Australian colonies. Finally, under this head may be quoted, the instance of successful federation in working order since 1871 in the Leeward Islands of the West Indies. But nearer to us than Greater Britain are the examples of the continent of Europe.

The rule of the Bernadottes was founded on the separate constitutions of Norway and Sweden, and a still greater case of a dual monarchy exists in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In Germany too, we have a yet more recently constructed organisation, built on the basis of federation between states bitterly opposed to one another, so late as the Seven Weeks War of '66. There are many descendants of the Vikings of old who would like to see a defensive bond created, uniting not merely two, but all three of the Scandinavian states in friendly partnership, for self-preservation against the threatening Colossus of the North, and there are not a few of the German-speaking race, to whom the Fatherland is something far more extensive than the realm of Kaiser William.

These examples of federated government, existing as they do, as so many solid factors for the peace or convulsion of Europe, have been absurdly instanced by the Nationalists, as strong arguments in favour of their doctrines, but the collection of states constituting the German Empire of to-day was tenfold more numerous before the shock of the French invasion, a century ago, swept away a crowd of fossil relics of the Middle Ages, and created in their place the Confederacy of the Rhine, from the ranks of which victorious Prussia sprang to leadership. The various constitutions of Scandinavia, Germany and Austro-Hungary, are simply historical survivals, which have been left to puzzle sovereigns and ministers and to bring from time to time, and with aggravating frequency, political matters to a dead lock. The flood of events which has spared so much in

northern and central Europe, has, on the other hand, in France and Italy carried away most of the provincialism which in the one country might have tended to foster the customs and dialects of the Breton or the Norman, or in the other, to perpetuate the differences between the Lombardian and Neapolitan. After all, the whole tendency of the modern political development of states is in favour of unity. The maintenance or abolition of slavery was a secondary matter in the American Civil War. In like manner the question as to whether a Hohenzollern should be allowed to take the Spanish crown was a minor detail in the circumstances leading to the Franco-German war of 1870. In America, the vital issue was one of union or disruption, and, with respect to Germany, it may be said that Napoleonic aggression created a mighty Teutonic empire out of a confused conglomeration of communities which, up to then, figured collectively as a mere geographical expression. Even in the last Carlist war the Basques fought as much for their ancient privileges as for Spanish Legitimacy.

Some of the examples we have indicated may appear scarcely to the point, in discussing the question of Imperial Federation, but it should be remembered that if the various portions of this Empire cannot continue to hang together, bound by mere sentiment, then precedents may count for much in altering a framework built on precedent. At the outset it must be clearly understood that the colonies would be content with absolutely nothing short of *direct* representation. Any doubt on that head has been set at rest by the emphatic declaration of the premiers, during the recent visit to this country, and especially by the utterances of Sir Wilfrid Laurier who, whether in London or Paris, spoke for the Dominion with no ambiguity. It may also be considered as a foregone conclusion that such representation will be limited, for anything like a scheme for the three great self-governing groups to send a number of members here in proportion to their population, may be dismissed at once as unwieldy and impossible. As we have already said, Federation is an accomplished fact in Canada, it will also be so at no distant date in Australasia, and if Sir Gordon Sprigg is a true prophet, it will sooner or later come about in South Africa. Such final adoption of this system will undoubtedly facilitate its extension in an Imperial sense, for, it would seem, no very insuperable difficulty to evolve some method by which the federated councils of each of the three groups

could elect delegates to represent their interests in the mother-country. But even then there remains the *crux* of the whole matter to be considered. What are to be the powers of these chosen envoys of Greater Britain? A host of suggestions have been put forward during the last ten years or so, and still there is no consensus of opinion. It has been seriously proposed for instance that a beginning should be made by giving each of the agents-general a seat *ex officio* in either or both Houses. That idea was no sooner propounded than it was scouted by the agents-general themselves, and Sir Saul Samuel among them found time to condemn the suggestion, even when overwhelmed with telegrams of congratulation on the offer of troops for the Soudan by New South Wales. Another and more recently propagated notion is one in favour of making the premiers of each of the self-governing colonies a peer—presumably a life peer—but it may be taken for granted that the democracies of Greater Britain would have as little to do with such a plan as the agents-general would with the other we have mentioned. Lord Rosebery has, whilst so strongly advocating the principles of Imperial Federation as to be afraid lest he should be thought a man with but one idea, pointed to the example of the Territorial Delegates in the United States Legislature, who have the right to speak but not to vote. This state of things however would never satisfy the ambition of our trans-marine kinsmen. They would justly regard the offer of such a form of emasculated representation as an insult.

In the election of delegates by the federated councils of each of the three great groups, would seem to lie the easiest and most practical solution of the difficulty, each delegate debating and voting along with his fellow members unfettered, except by the wisdom of the Speaker and the common sense of the House. Moreover, three seats might be allotted in the Cabinet to members representing Canada, Australia, and South Africa. There remains the scheme lately suggested by Mr. Chamberlain for the creation of a National Council, a plan which, whilst commending itself by its very looseness and therefore freedom from chances of friction, is open to the objection that colonial representation would not be *direct*.

Acting on these, or any other lines, will tax the ingenuity and prudence of the most far-seeing of our statesmen whose lot it may be to decisively grapple with the question, but that it will have to be solved ultimately, in some shape or other can hardly be doubted except by

the greatest pessimist as to the future of our race. To those who complacently say, that because things have gone on very well so far, it were best to let well alone, we can only point out that if the sparsely peopled settlements of a hundred years back have developed into the huge and well ordered communities we are all so proud of to-day, in another decade or two, these off-shoots of ours will merit their proud title of Greater Britain as much by the enumeration of the registrar as the estimate of the surveyor. If they loyally choose to sink or swim, under the old flag, we must be prepared to accord them some share in determining the destinies of that flag, for the alternative of federation is separation. The statesman who, whilst recognising the claims of our kin beyond the seas, attempts to approach the difficulties of federation with a light heart, would be committing an egregious blunder, but the man in power who shuts his eyes to the inevitable and trusts to events shaping themselves, would be committing something worse than a crime.

The foreigner, with a wish father to the thought, points to the lessons of the past and confidently predicts that this empire will decline and fall to pieces, as did the empires of Rome and Spain. His logic sounds plausible to the Little Englander, and others of a parochial turn of mind. "All great empires have fallen. The British Empire is a great one. Therefore the British Empire will fall." And yet the fallacy is obvious enough. This realm has had no predecessor in the world's history. The constitution of our motherland has been copied by nation after nation in modern times, but its colonial system can never be imitated, for no other race is in the running.

Having glanced at various examples of federated government, and some of the proposals made with regard to its adoption by ourselves, it may not be amiss to consider for a moment what the outcome of Imperial Federation may be for us, in peace or war. If we go back to the outset of the reign of George the Third and compare the area of this country with that of its American Plantations, we can readily understand why the colonists, even if they did not object to share in the pecuniary burden incurred by the Seven Years War, yet firmly raised the cry of "no taxation without representation." Heaven knows, they had little to do with the bringing about of this sanguinary conflict! It was the long nursed thirst for vengeance on Frederic of Prussia, which at last impelled Maria Theresa, with the

connivance of the French king's mistress, to commence a gigantic war, which only ceased after it had raged over Central Europe, North America, and India. The expansion of the resources and population of the original States of the Union since the declaration of Independence, may enable us to vaguely guess what the development of the Cape, Canada, and Australia will be during a corresponding period. The United Kingdom, with its area of 120,000 square miles and a population of 37,000,000, has in its keeping, so to speak (for under present conditions we should, in the event of another great maritime war, be in the position of trustee and executor at once) the fate of 11,000,000 square miles with a population of at least 350,000,000. An unwise decision on the part of a government unduly swayed by a democracy gone mad might precipitate a war such as the civilised world has not yet witnessed. Not a single community of Greater Britain would have the smallest share in bringing about what might to them mean ruined commerce and bombarded coasts. If, for the sake of argument, we imagine the possibility of a triumphant coalition of foreign nations forcing upon us a humiliating peace, would Canada or Australia, with their nine millions of people of the white race, be consulted? And our kinsmen of South Africa, although far outnumbered by the natives, are already in a position to point to their constitutional progress and claim to have some voice in critical affairs, the final issue of which may be one of life or death to them. The masses here have a strong leaven of conservatism at the bottom, which at serious political junctures, tells with sweeping effect at the polls, even in the working-class constituencies of Lancashire or the Metropolis, but the *vox populi* is sometimes worse than erratic, and if unscrupulous leaders, carried way by the excitement of the hour, rush to extremes from which there can be no going back, what will the democracies of our great colonies think? If the nation should waken one day to find that by some blundering or criminal mismanagement its naval and commercial supremacy were shattered and that its representatives were obliged to sign worse conditions than were those of France in '71, then the mob might rise in its wrath, and hang the men who had wrought the mischief, from the highest pinnacles of St. Stephen's, but the people of the colonies might do worse, and taking down the flag which they had had no share in disgracing, angrily snap the link of union with us. Through generations to come they would treasure

the old ensign, as the French Canadians have to this day their tattered Bourbon banner, but it would be a relic of an allegiance gone for ever.

We can, however, console ourselves with the conviction that the day is not far distant when Westminster shall ring with cheers, such as have never yet been heard there, hailing the coming of the members for Greater Britain. Well may the hostile foreigner, and the Little Englander recognise in that patriotic welcome, the unmistakable evidence that the disunion they have so fondly waited and longed for, was an idle dream, and all would-be enemies take to heart the truth that the voice of England is no longer an uncertain utterance, but the emphatic decision of a federated and united empire. But whilst contemplating the great likelihood of a combination of the Powers against us, we cannot avoid thinking that such an unnatural partnership as one between France and Germany is by no means so improbable as at first sight may appear. With the one we have dormant causes of friction in Newfoundland and West Africa, not to speak of what many Frenchmen regard as quite sufficient reason for a rupture—our occupation of Egypt. With the other we are carrying on a great commercial war, and the irritating conduct of the Kaiser William in connection with South African affairs is fresh in our minds.

That France and Germany may agree to bury the hatchet over Alsace and Lorraine, and having made some kind of compromise, should go shares with Russia, in order to strip us of our colonies, is not a contingency so remote or incredible as many would think. Such a compromise is just now the subject for suggestions and discussion in the German Press. It would be well, however, for the confederates, before embarking on such a partition scheme, to pause and ask themselves: "What do they know of England, who only England know?" In a few weeks after the declaration of war, 20,000 Australians will have occupied New Caledonia, and the forces of Canada and the Cape will have swept the French and German flags from the islands of the Pacific and the coasts of Africa. A new epoch in military annals will then have opened, and the world will behold with astonishment the terrible game of war played from Pall Mall with the legions of an entire continent like Australia striking as a powerful factor, simultaneously with the levies of

Canada, India and the Cape; and our navy repeating, although on a far grander scale, the sledge-hammer blows of 1797.

Perhaps the historian of the future, in narrating those events, will be justified in dating the beginning of a new military power from the memorable display of June 22, between the Palace and St. Pauls, which brought Imperial Federation and its warlike possibilities home to the mind of every spectator. If, however, such unity, means so much from a military and naval point of view, how infinitely more important to the reflective mind must appear its magnificent results on the development of the Empire's trade? The colonies are already our greatest commercial clients, and the intercourse, vast as it now is, will rapidly increase year by year. They are at present Protectionists, whilst we are Free Traders; but Canada has given us a new tariff, and the promulgation of this marks the beginning of a new commercial era, which shall witness more equitable systems reigning between Great Britain and her colonies. Indeed, the action of Canada is a signal for an all-round change, and the forerunner of most important fiscal and postal reforms.

Despite the apparently abortive conclusion of the recent conference of premiers, which was after all merely tentative in its conception and carrying out events are moving apace. Only a few short years ago the topic of this article seemed so visionary that the rank and file of politicians refused to discuss it seriously, but in these days, we hear of Sir Wilfrid Laurier speaking in French, and in the capital of the French nation, and driving home to the hearts of his audience the vital necessity of Imperial Federation. The subject, in truth, has lately leaped into a prominence which makes it no longer merely a question for philosophical reviewers, but one that appeals to the strongest instincts of the masses.

The temporary loss of Khartoum, the ignominious surrender of the Transvaal, and our concessions to Germany in New Guinea, looked, indeed, like disastrous checks to the growth of Imperialism. Even the alienation of the insignificant islet of Heligoland wounded the feelings of many a patriotic John Bull, and gave rise to Radical sneers at the Hohenzollern influences at work at the Court of St. James. The cry of "England for the English" never failed to stir the nation from the days of Earl Godwin, or Simon de Montfort, down to those of the present, and as there were ever found strong men in the past when the critical moment came, so we find them

to-day. Cecil Rhodes has engulfed the Transvaal by an addition to British territory immeasurably greater than that which we so meekly yielded up after Majuba; and the diplomatists of Berlin know by this time that the dispatch of a flying squadron means something more than an idle threat. British officers, too, are slowly but surely leading their forces up the Nile, and the outpost of civilisation which Gordon held so long and so heroically against a flood of barbarism will in time be rescued from the clutches of the Mahdists. The schoolboy looking in the window of a Fleet Street map-seller can realise the possibility of what his father never dreamed of, namely, a railway connecting Cape Town with Alexandria. A fact like this convinces him, as it must any Englishman with an atom of patriotism, that we have an Empire worth keeping. We have our frontier wars and African troubles; but these are but healthy incentives to greater union.

The tidings of the triumph of the Commander of the Faithful over the Greek unbelievers in Thessaly, his sanguinary deeds of extermination in Armenia, and his successful shilly-shallying with the Powers for so many months, have by now travelled to every bazaar of Cabul and India, and perhaps account for an unrest which is, maybe, the herald of a revolt of Islam. Such an eventuality might tempt France and Russia to seize the opportunity, despite the circumstance that each of these countries has some millions of Moslem subjects. Even this pass would be one more lesson on the lasting truth that unity is the essential condition of the existence of our world-wide dominion, and if unmistakable signs point out the form that this unity should take, let us, by all means follow them, or else erect on the Thames Embankment a statue to Mr. Labouchere, for Macaulay's New Zealander to gaze upon.

Where the Peewits Cry.

By VERNER FENTON.

Author of "THE MOMENT OF TRIUMPH," etc.

CHAPTER I.

IS THIS LOVE?

HER heart lifted with a sense of the joy of life, as the first notes of "John Peel" sounded through the ballroom.

"Come," he said, simply, raising his arm to her waist, as she stood beside him.

How the wild music, and the old memories, and the present well-nigh intolerable excitement, strove together in her bursting heart! The bandsmen broke out into the lilting words:

"D'ye ken John Peel, with his coat so gay?
D'ye ken John Peel at the break of day?"

It was taken up by the dancers—wildly, musically, as they came thundering down the ballroom floor on feet of springing steel. Only a tone of voice, a word, a look, was needed to make it perfect. It came.

He glanced down at her, curiously. His odd, muffled laughter smote upon her straining ears. She knew that laugh well. It was as inscrutable as his eyes. "Peewit," he said, "do you care for me?"

"What do you think?"

"I believe you do," he answered slowly. "I wonder why?"

"I don't know. I used to hate you."

"All of me?"

"Yes, I think so. Your conceit, your indifference, your airs of superiority——"

"Oh, well! if that is what you think of me——" somewhat nettled.

"I said 'used,' Aubrey," the girl answered, appealingly.

He looked down at her again. "You are a strange being. But I really believe you do like me—now. I wonder why?" he repeated again. He noticed the shine of tears in her eyes, and the untranslatable look deepened in his own. Then, quite suddenly, the music of the voices, of the lights, of the dancing feet—the strong passion of such natures—got into the boy's voice and eyes. "Peewit," he

cried, "don't be unhappy! It's all right; I love you—*love* you. Do you hear? And the six months can't make any difference." Nevertheless, into the last words there crept an alien note. A minute after he went on: "But, let us suppose—just for fun—that I did change; what then? Should you, like the 'new woman,' break into a storm of reproaches, and flourish your 'rights' and your 'wrongs' in my face?" He spoke jestingly, but the speculative look had come back to his eyes as he watched her.

"What should I do? Break my heart in secret, I suppose—fade out of your life, I hope. But I should certainly not flourish my rights or my wrongs in anyone's face. Don't you know the only 'right' that belongs to any woman is the right to suffer? It is not new; it is as old as the hills, as old as love itself. Men never seem to understand that we would rather be made to suffer by the man we love, than to rejoice by one to whom we are indifferent. When a woman loves a man, her first thought and desire, is to give herself entirely to him. Her daily prayer, to be allowed to sacrifice herself in some way for him." Her voice fell silent, and he said nothing, still looking at her curiously. Perhaps, as she said, he could not understand.

And then, into that silence broke the last notes of the evening, "God save the Queen," and the dancing was over.

Ten minutes later, Aubrey stood on the wet sands, his face turned towards the wide sea, into which he would plunge next minute. He was just at that curious age, boyhood merging into manhood, which has always something so pathetic clinging to it. He had sped quickly over the rough, bent grass, and sand-dunes, down to this quiet spot, where no sound disturbed the broad and lonely stillness, save

"The voice of the long sea-wave, as it broke
Now and then in the dim, grey dawn,"

out of the heat and the noise, away from the thousand human emotions that had stirred his pulses in the ballroom, while the maddening waltz-strains thrilled through his veins, into the divine beauty of the June morning, almost before the quivering stars had faded from the sky.

Silent, absorbed in his own thoughts, something shone straight from the heart of the innocent dawn, over the waves in the east into his face. Even as he stood watching, the light broadened, and the sun

rose over the shining edge of the far-off sea-line. It grew and strengthened, flashing its bright rays across the waste of waters into the human eyes turned towards it from the shining sands. The purity of the new day smote, with a sense of contrast that was almost an audible cry of pain, on the strange, dark beauty of his young face, on the brown hair, thick like the fur of some wild animal, on the clear, brown skin, beneath which the racing blood showed redly.

But the eyes were what arrested one's attention. The thick eyebrows meeting above the bridge of the nose, and forming an unbroken line to their tapering outer edges, gave to their already extraordinary darkness a yet deeper shadow; the heavy fringe of lashes helping the curious impression one received of something mysterious—even disastrous—impending; so sombre, so dark and unboylike were they. All the romance one has read of wild passion, uncontrollable impulses, love, hatred, revenge, martyrdom; of cruelty incredible, or of love unutterable came crowding into one's mind. Deep inscrutable eyes, though very quiet now. But someday—somehow—the restless, inarticulate spirit, looking so wistfully out of their depths, at this moment, would find its voice, and then—such a face never yet wore its way through life without trouble. A look of restraint, of repression, was there; of something shrewd, determined and selfish, and yet, withal, of an extraordinary melancholy—so profound, that nothing could dissipate it for long. A face of magnificent possibilities, wonderful strength; a face for which a woman would sell her soul if she loved it. And this was the man Peewit tried to deceive her own heart about.

What were his thoughts of her as he stood upright, fronting the dawn as he fronted life? Was the smile, now curving his masterful lips, one of disdain for a love which, though it had been sought, apparently so far outweighed his own? Was it of tenderness and regret for the pain that might be hers yet—Peewit's? Or merely the outcome of the happy, conscious power of youth? Such are idle questionings. For who may guess what is hid in the deep heart of his brother?

* * *

The next day Peewit left, taking with her the memory of that ball—of Aubrey's eyes and voice, when he had told her at the last that he loved her, and before the look of speculative wonder, the note of distrust, had returned at the end—together with the one photograph

of him that she possessed, to be her companions through the long six months of silence and absence that he, in his curious farsightedness, had imposed upon himself and her. And each time that her eyes rested on the pictured representation of the one being she loved on earth, her heart expanded, and tears blurred her vision of the stern young face with, even there, the suggestion of critical laughter lurking at the corners of the beautiful mouth. She seldom thought what was to be the end of it all—she loved him so deeply, that the mere fact of her own emotions was enough for the present.

Then one day there came a letter. She had been travelling for hours, and was very tired. Weariness of the flesh had opened the door to a hunger of the soul; and how much she had been pining for some sign from Aubrey, she hardly dared admit to herself. She would not read it till she was alone, and with the commotion of arrival, it was well on into the small hours before, at last, her friends left her, and she had the opportunity she sought. Even then, for long the letter lay unopened on her lap, she could afford to wait and think and dream—now. It was the only one she was likely to get, so let her make the most of it. Perhaps, also, there was a faint undertone of apprehension as to what its contents might disclose. When at last she summoned up courage to open it, she read:

“MY DARLING,

Don't blame me,” her cheek blanched, her heart beat wildly. “I must write just one short letter to my sweet Peewit. I never thought about its being so hard—this silence, I mean. I long for you every hour of the day. Oh, that the six months were past, and your next visit here were due again. Dear, answer this, and tell me that you are not unhappy; and sometimes think of me, but not too often. I don't want more, and I won't write again. I wonder what you are doing now at this moment, while you are reading this? Dear, don't care for me too much, I am not worth it, and I do not want you to.

Your loving

AUBREY.”

The sound of four vibrating strokes came up through the sleeping house from the hall. The house was still and silent, and dark as the grave. Was it light outside yet? Hardly knowing what she did, she opened the shutters and flung up the window, and the dim glory of a May morning, with all its sights and sounds, rushed in. And

as she looked, the sky, with its fleecy clouds, momentarily took on a deeper tinge of pink—flame-colour a few minutes later. The call of the cock-pheasant, the cooing of the stock-dove, the wild triumph of the thrush's song flooded the dim, mysterious spaces and shadows of the dewy earth, and swept in waves over the golden meadows. Down the wood walks the shadows lay heavy and still—life had not waked there yet. In front of the house she noted the dark hoof-prints of horses' feet on the pale gravel, lessening away into far perspective down the drive. That air of mystery inseparable from early dawn pervaded the moist, hushed land. Only the birds and the winds were awake, with their jubilant gurgling songs, their sighing softness of breathings.

The inborn instinct of worship to an unseen Creator, of passionate gratitude to Him who had made so beautiful a world and filled it with so marvellous a thing as love, was strong in the girl's heart as she sat—scarcely breathing—by the open window.

It has been well said by Ouida, that "a great love is a great holiness."

Up through the pure brightness of the fresh sunrise—hardly less pure in thought herself—from the girl's deepest consciousness there winged its way, a prayer and a thanksgiving to the White Throne of God. But of the thoughts which overflowed her heart, who shall speak? They could hardly have been "cribbed, cabined and confined," in set words, for their colours were as ethereal and iridescent as the lights in the dewdrop which hangs from the nodding grass.

And then Peewit made a great and irreparable mistake; but there was none to tell her so. She had been lonely all her life, and was as lonely in her love now, as afterwards she was in other things.

She took a sheet of paper and wrote—or tried to write—some of these intangible thoughts for Aubrey's eyes. She tried to tell the man she loved of the height and depth of that love; and you, knowing the world, are aware that she had better have cut her own throat, for you will probably have read that "No man should be loved too well (or told of it, shall we say?) It wearies him, and makes him too sure.

"Your letter has been to me like the dew in a parched wilderness. I feel now as though I could not have lived through another day without some sign from you, though, of course, one *can* live through anything if one must. There is a creeper on the wall, this side of

the house, a Westeria, and some of its long silky leaves are between me and the sun. That is like my heart since your love has come to it. It is irradiated through and through with light. I can hardly believe it to be the same thing as it was before the sun rose. You ask me what I am doing while I read your letter. I am thinking, dreaming of you. Your love to me is the mystery lurking in the shadows of the woodwalks out there. It is in the voice of the stock-dove, in the wild song the thrush is pouring forth outside my window. It is in the golden glory of the king-cups in the meadows below. It is light, and life, and God! Everything that is beautiful, everything that is true and holy *is* you. Aubrey, you tell me not to love you too much. It is too late to say that now."

That was in May. It was the winter before they met again.

One cold afternoon, soon after her arrival, he came to call. The conversation was general; she sat rather silent, shivering now and then. Bye and bye their hostess rose, saying:

"I promised to go to tea with the A's. I shan't be long, so I hope I may find you when I return;" then, turning to the girl, she added, "Mind you give him some tea. Ah! here it comes. *Adieu*!"

And so the first awkwardness of meeting was over. The door closed at last behind the footman, and they were alone. The girl's heart beat like a sledge-hammer in her brain as she continued the trivialities of conversation. Would he say anything now that the chance had presented itself so naturally? For some minutes it seemed that he would not, and afterwards she could not remember one word of that conversation; but at last it came to an end by his saying:

"Well; I suppose I must soon be going. Come and sit over by the fire; I can't talk to you so comfortably while you are so far away." He was sitting on the arm of a deep chair drawn up on the bear-skin rug.

Shyly she rose and went over to him, glancing for a moment into his deep, strange eyes. A smile crept to his lips. Gently he pushed her into the seat beside him. And then the glamour of his presence possessed her, making her forget how time was travelling apace and bringing with it the critical moment of her destiny. Years afterwards, when she lay dying, there sounded again in her ears the same weird, melancholy street-cry, which, coming up the street from a

distance, fell loud through the silence of the room, and died off into silence once more as the feeble footsteps halted their shuffling gait down the empty street.

"Have you missed me, Peewit, these long months since we met?"

"Yes, Aubrey."

His arm went round her slight form, and he drew her head down on to his rough-coated shoulder. She sighed deeply.

"Have you thought me a great brute, Peewit, all these months?"

"No."

"What could I do to make you hate me?" His lips were touching the soft hair on her forehead.

"Nothing."

There was no passion in his eyes, only the old look of speculation. But she could not see this, for her head rested against his shoulder, and only the white passion of despair lay under her drooped lids.

"Because, dear, I want to avoid doing it."

She sat up quickly. "Aubrey, I must speak. How long, oh, how long is this to go on? It is cruel! You men never dream what you make us suffer in our forced silence, while you are just amusing yourselves. I cannot bear it much longer. Tell me it is all over, and have done with it. It will be harder later." She trembled violently. His smile deepened.

"I will not tell you it is all over. Why should I, when it is not. You care for me; and I—do I not care for you?" But still his deep voice had more of question than assertion in it.

"Sometimes I think you never have—never will. You feel too sure of me. It has all come about so gradually, that I hardly knew I had got into such deep waters, or I ought never to have acquiesced in the arrangement; but the strange part is, that I do not despise myself for it. You play with me as a cat plays with a mouse. You will never love anyone unless she is unattainable."

His eyes kindled, as she shrank away from him. He caught her roughly in his arms.

"Peewit, give me a kiss. I could make you if I liked, but I want you to do it of your own free will." Seeing that she struggled feebly in his strong arms: "No? Why? Don't you care for me after all?"

"You know that I do. But please don't laugh. I can't bear to if—you are only playing. To me there is something, well,

sacred," growing suddenly scarlet, as she spoke of her inmost feelings, "there is something sacred about it to me, and I could not bear to let you kiss me—if it is only just for fun. I know I am old-fashioned about these things—you will call me prudish perhaps."

"My darling," he cried passionately, at last, "I love you for your scruples. I did begin in fun. I don't know what it is, but something in your little white face and frightened manner always gives me a desire I find it hard to resist, to play upon your feelings. But never forget, I have told you from the first that it was not a polished society man you loved." There was almost a tone of remorse in his serious voice. He went on tenderly, "Never mind, I won't force you, but I think you might—just once." His deep, beautiful eyes were looking down into her face, small and scared, and he still held her in his arms.

"I will, Aubrey. You make me do anything when you look like that, ask like that."

They were standing up on the hearthrug now; her arm slid quickly round his neck. With a stifled sigh from her, their lips met.

The next moment the door shut with a sharp sound behind him. She was alone. She fell on her knees by the chair in a sudden storm of tears, burying her face in her arms, oblivious of the possible interruption of strangers.

* * * *

Other meetings came and went during that bitter cold winter. Sometimes leaving the girl divinely happy, but more often with the feeling that it would be a small thing to lay down her life; while blenching at the knowledge that it had to be lived through to the very end. How could she, the woman, ask what his varied moods—now gentler than his best, now colder than the ice—betokened? Or how long the torturing uncertainty should last? Each day found her weaker and less able to take the situation into her own hands and deal a violent death to all her hopes?

And so the days and the weeks flew by in fitful unrest, and the last day of her long visit dawned. There had been skating for sometime past, and to-day everyone had repaired to the ice.

For the first hour she skated by herself, then Aubrey found her out, and bore her away with steady, swinging steps, to a distant quiet spot, where skaters were few, because the ice was indifferent. The scarlet sun was setting in a red glory over a white world, and

the glow of it was on his vivid beauty. The delicate tracery of the trees showed up sharp and distinct against the cold, clear sky. He clasped her small hands close, as he bent to her fur-encircled face, white and fragile-looking.

"Steady! You are getting tired?"

"No," she smiled up at him. "I never feel tired when you hold me like that. You are so strong."

"This is our last day together, Peewit. I know, I know—don't let us talk of it, but be nice to me, as nice as you can."

"How can I? What would you have?" trembling all over.

"I would have your little hands in mine—like this; I would have your dear eyes smiling and happy. Don't let us spoil our last day together by any words. See, I have a letter for you, but you shall not read it until after I have bidden you good-bye, which must be before long, I fear, as I have a busy night before me." Freeing one hand, he took an envelope from the breast-pocket of his Norfolk jacket, which she, still trembling, hid in her muff. Cowardice and modesty tied her tongue. Surely, surely her fate was propitious, or he would never speak and look like that, up to the very last hour they were together.

So, gathering courage, she talked happily to him as he desired, and time sped away; and the wind sighed among the sedges.

And then the last moment arrived. With eyes suffused with the tears of an inexplicable and overmastering emotion, she gazed up at the darkening sky, whence the sun had slowly faded. Face to face they stood in the waning evening light. The ring of steel on the ice from the skaters afar off sounded weirdly monotonous through the winter gloaming. Now and again a snow-laden twig snapped and fell on the ice at the edge, with a light thud.

"Good-bye, Peewit. Don't be unhappy any more."

She laughed out. Did she look unhappy?

With a sudden movement he seized her hand, pressing it ardently to his lips. A dark shadow fell over his always veiled and mysterious eyes. His stern young face softened incredibly; his lips moved. What was he about to say?

"Give me back," he began—stopped—smiling oddly, the while. Then he looked deep in her eyes, and said again, for the last time, "Forgive me all I ever did to make you unhappy, my Peewit, and—goodbye," raising his tweed cap; and without one backward glance

at the forlorn little figure among the reeds, and with the last fading light of the sun on his brilliant youthful beauty, he swung round on his heel, and was out of sight in a minute, or at most, a speck on the black ice.

Peewit watched it till it faded into the indistinguishable mass of figures at the edge of the lake. Then, with a tremulous breath, she stood, shivering a moment, before breaking the red seal on the envelope Aubrey had given her.

And as she read, the sky paled, the wind wuthered eerily through the brown dry reeds beside her, and one bright star quivered like a tear in the dark heavens above her. The steely crescent of the young moon shone whitely over the motionless snowfields, and the hum of the skaters waxed fainter than death.

"Call me all the names under the sun that are bad. I deserve it all. We may never meet again, perhaps; but if we do, your small, pathetic face will move me again to try my power over you. Even if I loved you, as I suppose men love the women they wish to marry, you could not keep my love. Therefore, it is best not to let you risk the whole happiness of your life in my ungentle hands. Do I love you? Yes; I believe I do, in my way. But my way is not your way, and you could never understand it or me. I think it is not in me to be faithful to any woman, and certainly I should not be to one so gentle and good as you. Jealousy, I believe, would be the only power that would keep me faithful, and that is not a power you would ever be likely to wield over me. There is something wild and lawless in my blood and in every fibre of my being; something or somebody may one day tame it. At present, I am no fit lord for one of your tender nature. I should break you on the wheel every hour of my life if I did you the great wrong of marrying you, and you would submit, looking at me ever, with 'those same pathetic, haunting eyes of thine.' Forget me—or no! I cannot quite bring myself yet to ask that of you. But think of me seldom, only when you hear your namesakes calling to each other over the wolds and the moorlands wild; let their mournful plaint speak for me—plead for me—for my forgiveness. Keep a secret corner of your heart always for your so worthless Aubrey, and remember that you were his first love, even if you were not strong enough to hold him and to keep him true to it."

A very low, soft sound, half moan, half sob, broke from her lips, and went sighing away through the grasses and sedges around. Her

eyes went upwards to the sky, as she cried, with a breaking heart, in the words of Felix Holt's mother: "God was cruel when He made women." The scene that lay beneath those heavens seemed, indeed, to her

" . . . sadder than a single star

That sets at twilight in a land of reeds."

The bitter, gross humiliation of it all she felt not at all, that was to come after: but Browning's magical words welled up in a flood to her heart:

"What need to strive with a life awry?

Had I said that, had I done this.

So might I gain, so might I miss.

Might she have loved me? just as well

She might have hated, who can tell?"

CHAPTER II.

THE SHADOWS OF THE PAST.

After a while a sort of maimed life began for her again. At first it was torture to her to watch the glories of a sunset, to listen to beautiful music, to read a moving book. Everything—as she had once written to Aubrey—that was beautiful *was* him. His mysterious eyes rose up and confronted her in unexpected corners.

But the weary months passed by somehow, and the following autumn-year found her paying visits in Scotland, and more or less herself again, outwardly. But those who knew her best were often surprised at the wall of coldness which seemed to divide them from her old spontaneous sympathies. She seemed alike indifferent to the joys or sorrows of her old friends.

One August evening she was standing, after dinner, on the wooden verandah that ran the length of the house, looking down at the silvered loch far below. It felt awesomely still to her after the fevered heat and throb of the London streets, the tramp of the myriad feet that go on and on, and cease not day or night—for London had been unusually hot that summer. A white light shone, yet, in the western sky. A summer's day dies hard in those northern regions: and a young moon hung low over the black hills, whose feet were bathed in the shining water.

The exquisite beauty of the quiet scene made her throat ache with unshed tears.

A man's voice beside her recalled her wandering thoughts. They two seemed to have the night and the beauty to themselves. In the drawing-room behind them, a girl was singing, softly, sweetly, with a chorus :

"Honey, my honey, the night is still and dark."

"We are all poets, geniuses, what you will, on a night such as this," the man began, half to himself, it seemed, with his face upturned to the glistening sky. "It is not difficult to believe in a God and a heaven to-night."

"No!" she answered, absently.

"Your thoughts are not here, I see. You live in London? Perhaps, then, all this," with a comprehensive sweep of those sensitive hands, "does not appeal to you?"

"I do live in London, that is all the more reason to revel in this. But it is apt to make one sad if it does not make one something worse. The majesty, the solitude, and the *peace* are such a contrast, well to my life, at any rate. Perhaps yours has been different."

He glanced swiftly at her. "Life is difficult," was all he said, but something in his tone, his manner, gave her a sudden sense of companionship. She did not feel quite so forlorn, so outcast from human fellowship as she had done for so long. "And yet, you would not have it otherwise, I daresay. I mean, you would not exchange your memories and your experiences, whatever they may have been, for a life of stagnation, such as many lead?"

She turned her face away from him, so that he saw only the oval of her cheek, and the hollow which should not have been there.

"No," she said, "I would not have it otherwise. I may have thought differently at one time. But now I know that memories, even if they be sad ones, are often our best possessions, and go with us beyond the grave. Oh, if one could only guess what lies there! Is it work? Is it rest? One craves one thing, then another."

He looked at her curiously.

"And what is it you would crave?"

"Rest, oh, rest!" she burst out, and in her voice there was a weak little catch. "Perhaps it is that I have been over-doing it in London this season, but the treadmill of society seems to have ground my very brains and feelings to powder. And yet it keeps one going, it prevents one thinking."

"Yes," he answered, quietly, "it prevents one thinking. But is that always a good thing? Is it not stronger, wiser to face one's destiny?"

"Strong! wise! that is for you men. How can you expect it of us, when our backs, almost from infancy, are bowed to breaking with the burdens of others as well as our own. When our hearts are for ever being pierced with the myriad sorrows of those around. One cannot walk down a single street in the poorer parts of the towns without seeing that in the faces which pass us, which makes us feel *sick* with pity for their unknown woes."

There was a strange passion in her voice. She wondered how and why the conversation had taken so serious a turn, not knowing that it was the sympathetic nature of the man which induced it. He had the faculty of drawing her out and making her talk. The pent up emotions of so many months began to find an outlet. He told her of the books he had read, the places he had seen, the people he had met. And oh, the blessed feeling of being interested once more. Something in that long talk spoke of a heart, a soul, as unrestful as her own. The soft grey mist came creeping up from the loch. It laid a tender hand on her troubled heart, and it grew still.

Then all in a minute she felt tired, and all interest in him vanished. She bade him good-night, and went in to sit brooding over the wood fire in her bedroom, while the last faint glimmer of light faded slowly over the mountain, and the hush of holy night lay over all.

And so the lovely August days slid by in many expeditions, and in many long talks with this new friend, with whom she soon felt on pleasantly familiar terms.

One day, when the others had made arrangements for going a long coaching expedition to some neighbours, he asked her if she felt equal to a walk to a distant spot. She assented readily, and they started. It was wet at first and the wind blew steadily in their faces. Now and then the vapours rolled away from the wild bare hills, revealing here and there a distant purple peak. Little clusters of delicate lady-birch waved their shadowy arms in the wind, their silver stems gleaming ghostly through the mist. The mountains closed in behind and opened out before them. Once when they came to a rougher bit of walking than usual he held out his hand to steady her as she jumped from rock to rock in the boggy moor. He held hers for a second or so after she was again

on firm heather-land. She raised her eyes unconcernedly to his, and what she saw there gave her a quick shock. A thrill shot from his fingers to hers as they lay passive in his hand. Until that moment no personal thought had entered her mind. They had talked as friends.

They walked on a few paces in silence, and when next they spoke all seemed different. Something had removed itself. They talked more of themselves, less of general things. Perhaps the calm which lurks in all lonely places, among all desolate hills, descended upon them as they advanced up the glen; the grand beauty of one of Scotland's loveliest haunts entering into their hearts with a sense of abiding peace, enabling them to talk with a freedom from constraint which they would never have dared to indulge in between four walls. It was a proof of his magnetic influence over her that, amid all their soul-stirring beauty, her thoughts had never once reverted to the past and the heartbreak it contained.

"I often think how happy one might be," he began, "if only one could take the days as they come, forgetting the things which are past, looking neither forward nor back!"

"In fact, if the past were as though it were not, and the future hidden." Her voice broke, and she looked away.

Quite suddenly, he said, glancing at her sideways, "Don't you think the past may be sometimes as though it were not? Don't you think it admissible to enjoy the good the gods send without troubling whither it leads?"

"I don't think I quite understand?"

"Take an instance I have in my mind. Say, for the sake of argument, a man makes a mess of his life. Certain results remain. Is he to carry the thought of it into every moment of his future? May he not lay it aside now and again—if he meets a wayfarer like himself, storm-bound, storm-beaten? May not they two be to one another as much, for the time being, as either wishes; comfort each other, hearten each other for the remainder of the long pilgrimage when each will be struggling on alone again?" A shadow crept into her face. "Do you mean that—if a man (or woman) has some unbreakable tie, he is yet at liberty—to make love, for that is what it really comes to—to another woman if he chose?"

He flushed scarlet all over his swarthy skin. "I did not say that! But all the same, a man may love a woman truly and well, though

earlier circumstances—things which happened before ever they two met—prevent his ever being more to her than a friend."

"I daresay," she answered, indifferently, "men are very strange, and I, for one, should never understand them." She felt angry, discomposed, she did not know why. At last she broke out, "And I don't believe you think so either! The better a man loves a woman—men such as you, I mean—" again he flushed hotly, "the less wrong they would do her, and it is a wrong—a great wrong—to lower our estimation of your sex, in whatever subtle manner you do it. For after all—this world is not the end; things may be straighter in the next. There is a verse I always like—do you know it?

. . . the quiet heavens seemed to say, consoling.
Only Endure!
They shall see God, who, bearing and believing,
Keep their hearts pure:
Some stony steps, and yet a little climbing,
The rest is sure."

" 'Keep their hearts pure' for God—and for her (or him!) That verse has often comforted me."

He answered nothing to this, but his furtive glance was often seeking her face, as they slowly walked on together in silence.

Up past the quaint little graveyard—so small, so empty, filled only with the graves of the crofters of these desolate regions—and there they stood, looking at the grassy mounds, and over the wide, smooth loch, to the mountains lying shadowy and dim beyond. They were on their homeward way, and the day was on the wane. He stood gazing into her eyes with a curiously eager expression in his own. In the morning she was leaving. Would they ever meet again?

She shivered, and pulled herself together. She felt instinctively attracted to the silent, reserved man—as, also, she knew he was to her—in that strange, mysterious hour where daylight and evening blend. She wondered what his thoughts were at that moment, and fancied that she partly guessed—was he not, for one thing, wondering what had given her the manner of one so much older than herself? For her part she felt a deep rest, a gladness, a peace. He had roused her from her deathly apathy that was fast turning her into stone.

He went a step closer. He was about to speak. She looked up—

again that thrill running through all her veins like fire. His eyes held hers, but his lips were still. How can eyes have that power, she asked herself? One looks, and eyes say nothing, and again, those same eyes speak of things unspeakable—talk a language over which our tongues falter and fail. Is it not that eyes do not lie because they do not bind us? No one can hold us accountable for all the piteous, the cruel, the passionate things they say.

She felt her own dilating with wonder, with awe, and a strange incredulity. Was the same old drama being enacted over again and she had not known it? Was it possible—for her? Or was not the old wound too fresh, the old memories too vivid yet for her to dream such dreams—for years to come, if indeed it should ever again be possible? And yet—such things had been, ere this!

It seemed to her, as they stood there under the wuthering pines on the hill-side, that now he was suddenly realising for the first time, the narrow line of time that divided the now from the then—how near was the moment approaching that would turn the present into the past. She began, herself, to realise how much he was to her—how his companionship had brought her back from the abyss of despair to the light of day, to hope, and the old belief in man's goodness.

Then, with an exclamation of annoyance, he cried, "How stupid I am! The post came in just as I was leaving the house, and I promised to give you this letter. Can you forgive me for forgetting it until this moment?"

Indifferently, she took the square envelope from him. But when her eyes fell on the writing which she had not seen for so many months, the colour forsook her lips, and her hand shook. The man, watching, saw it. Like all Aubrey's letters, this one was short, and had no conventional beginning or ending.

"Where are you? How are you? I have tried not to think of you, to write to you. It is no use. A consuming fire devours me for some sign from you. But I know you will never write again. Peewit—must it be so? Can we not be as we were before that cruel winter? Oh, what devil is it that tears me like this!" That was all. A wild frenzy of joy seized her, unlike anything she had ever before experienced, even when with him, and feeling his presence in every nerve of her body. Forgetful of the man beside her she raised her shining eyes and her lips moved. God was very near her then—she was alone with Him among the everlasting hills.

Though to her it seemed an age, in reality it was not many moments before this exaltation passed, and she knew what she must do. She could not endure the shame a second time. It could mean nothing else. His strength pitted against hers—ah! it was cruel! But had it not always been so—what was he if not cruel? it was his nature, bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh, and he could no more help it than she could help being weak. But—oh, it *was* hard. Just as she was beginning to forget and to build up for herself other interests.

For a long while she stood there silent. Then, as she turned listlessly to go back, the man stretched out his hand impulsively, and caught hers. "Of course I don't know—I don't want to know—what was in that letter. But I can read your face well enough by now to know that it was something hard to bear. You are a brave woman, and we all have our secret troubles. Let me here, and now, thank you for your friendship, for your sympathy. You have made my burdens lighter, would I could lighten yours."

She pressed his hand, her heart was too full for speech—well understanding the almost feminine tact which had prompted these words—the only sort of comfort that she could have stood just then. The next minute they turned towards the house.

CHAPTER III.

THE SHIPWRECK OF LOVE.

Later in the autumn she was staying with some friends on the Argyllshire coast.

October has its lovely days, and this was one of them. The sun brilliant, the wind cool, as the yacht sped down the Sound, the tide with them, and the blue hills of the island rising and fading as they went past.

On Shumack pier they picked up some friends who were to join them for the day's cruise, and among this little group, as they came on deck, Peewit noticed, with a glance of mutual recognition, her friend, Mr. Duncan; and something told her that this was no chance meeting. They shook hands and talked with the rest, their eyes meanwhile, engrossed with the changing beauties of the sea and land, as they flew along over the dancing waves. Amid those same scenes

Ossian's heroes lived and loved, fought and died. On these wild shores wandered the fair maids with cloudy hair and white faces watching from the lonely heights for the return of their brothers and husbands from the chase and from the war—their shabby dog friends at their heels—in the purple shadows of evening. On their starboard, lay the hills of Tura; fading over their bows were the dimly-mysterious heights of Scarba, in whose glens and corries dwelt the wild-eyed stag, the joy of the sportsman.

A few store-houses scattered over the low shore, constituted the village.

Anchoring in the little bay, sheltered from every wind, the gig was lowered, and carried them all to the rugged shore—to the slippery stone-pier landing built out into the water.

Some of the party went up the hill to the house—Duncan and Peewit loitering among the rocks, waiting for the signal which should tell them that their neighbours were at home.

Then for the first time that day, fixing her gaze on his face, she noticed how white and ill he was looking. His eyes seemed brighter and darker than usual. He was very quiet as they wandered over the little strip of silver sand, or stood gazing across at the yacht anchored in the sunny waters.

He stooped over a great flat stone on the sands. "If years hence, you ever come here again, I want you to think of me. I am going to scratch my name here—cockney-fashion—and yours under it, if I may," with a short laugh, glancing up into the face above him and suiting the action to the word. A short pause, and then he murmured, under his breath "Peewit." No more. Not any surname. And as the single word fell from his lips it mingled with the monotonous boom of the waves in the silence.

A white signal fluttered from above. Warm welcome awaited them in the house upon the hill, and a luxurious tea was spread upon the snowiest of cloths in the dim old antlered hall, decorated with the hunting-spoils of countless generations.

A lazy saunter through the little suntrap of a garden afterwards disclosed marvels of flowering beauty. Hedges of faint blue veronicas; trees of graceful fuchsia, whose heads were as big as oranges; masses of sweet verbena, whose exquisite lemon' perfume mingled with smell of the briny breezes blowing up straight from the ocean; cherry-pie dark as the purple shadows fast shrouding the

hills of Islay lying in shade, and sweet as the breath of the shaggy Highland cattle wending their slow way down to the shore, from among the ragged tufts of sea-drift and dying heather on the hillside.

Then, up anchor and away in the evening shades. The sun sank over the Western island, the deep purple line of which meets the purple of the sea-line.

A solitary heron stood on one long-jointed leg, fishing for his evening meal.

One by one her companions retired below for warmth, as the chill of the evening mists crept over the sea. Peewit preferring fresh air, remained on deck. Black clouds, barred by a perfect rainbow arc loured over the pale gold of the sunset sky. A brilliant shaft of flame shot up this black mass, and died out. The grey shadows stole over the shivering water. A storm was upon them. She sat alone on deck, except for the crew in the bows, listening to the great drops hissing past in the green waves. The wind was keen, but amid her furs and rugs she enjoyed the sting of it in her face, and she was thinking. A step sounded behind her. A tall figure loomed up from below, and advanced to sit in silence at her side. A great fit of shivering seized her, for she knew that the hour was come.

The storm passed, and the stars shone out in fitful gleams, making faint glimmerous tracks across the water. She can see the white of his face against the dark background of night. The silence for some minutes was unbroken except for the throb of the wheel, the churn of the water foaming past the yacht's side in the dusk, and the moan of the wind in the rigging. The absolute solitude and loneliness of the sea and sky and land occupied the mind like a great ache.

He began at last: "Have you enjoyed to-day? I fear you are tired. I think it has been the longest day of my life—and it is not over yet."

She turned towards him and saw that he was not looking at her but over to the land, behind which lingered yet a pale strip of daylight. Though this speech might have been taken objection to on the score of its being but doubtfully complimentary, she knew what he meant, and waited.

He went on. "For ever, to-day will stand as a day apart. To-day there is something to be done—something to be said—and you will help me." He sat, rigid, immovable. "I once said to you that sometimes a young man makes a mess of life. I have done so."

His words came disjointedly, his meaning was hardly clear. She wonders, did he think he owed her an apology for the past? Surely not, for that would be too horrible. She started up from her lounging position. "Mr. Duncan, do not say anything for which you may be sorry afterwards. Do not. If you have made a mess of your life, what is that to me?"

Perhaps her words sounded more cruel out there in the dark than if he could have seen her face, anyhow he cried quickly, "Stop till I have told you all. No one can be more humble than I—but, well you see I have to suffer—so be lenient for this one hour and hear me out." His voice dropped, and a great pity seized her. What has he to say?

"Some years ago I was much thrown with a girl. I grew fond of her. There was a tacit understanding between us that we were to be engaged so soon as I had sufficient to justify it. Well, I got on in my profession and began to think about a definite engagement with her, and was tolerably happy in the contemplation of it. But gradually doubts rose up. I began to wonder what I once had seen in her. Then—I met you."

A long pause followed his quiet words, during which he never moved. Up from below rose a woman's voice, the light touch of a woman's fingers upon the guitar. A momentary cessation, a hum of voices, and she recommenced. Her voice floated up from the lighted cabin to where they two sat in the night, and the wind, together, and so far! She was singing that sad and beautiful song "Ettrick" to Lady John Scott's setting—

"O murmuring waters!
Have ye no message for me?
Ye come from the Hill of the West
Where his step wanders free—
Did he not whisper my name?
Did he not utter one word?
And trust that its sound o'er the rush
Of thy streams might be heard."

"And that cured me of every lingering feeling I had for her. *You* became the one crying necessity of my life! I hoped it might pass. I tried to keep away from you, but at times the longing to see you again became intolerable, and when at last the opportunity presented itself I eagerly embraced it. Every word you ever spoke remains in my mind. Sometimes I have fancied that you hated me,

and there was always something about you which forbade my hoping greatly that I should ever have the power to make you care for me, though occasionally you were friendly enough; but then again, your condescending manner—as it seemed to me—almost turned my infatuation into hatred. I felt, I knew, that there had been a power and a sorrow in your life which was an effectual bar to your heart. This knowledge maddened me, while yet it grieved me to think that the common lot of humanity had fallen to you also."

She turned in the dark, half reaching out her hand to him in sympathy, only to withdraw it again before he was aware of her intention. And the music mingled with the throb of the paddle, the moan of the wind.

"Oh! murmuring waters!
The sound of the moorlands I hear,
The scream of the her'n and the eagle,
The bell of the deer,
The rustling of the heather and gorse,
The shiver of grass on the lea,
The sigh of the wind from the hill
Hast thou no voice for me?"

The white gulls wheeled and swooped overhead, their shrill split cry falling monotonously through the dark sky.

"At last, the longing to hear your opinion on the trouble that was consuming me, took possession of me. I tried to get you to say how you would view a man's conduct who broke his engagement because he had grown to care for someone else too much. But you were enviously reticent—so much so that I began to wonder if you guessed my secret. And I gathered that a man who did such a thing would fall in your esteem beyond hope of pardon. Then I grew frightened at myself, at my future. While fearing to sink in your good opinion I yet craved the more blindly for a word, a look that should be warmer than that accorded to friendship." A wilder gust of wind than usual lifted a corner of one of her wraps, flinging it violently in her face. The gulls swooped lower; the wind shrieked through the rigging above. He leaned forward hastily to re-arrange her wrap, hesitated—then resumed his seat, his next words sounding hoarse and strained. "Then your manner seemed to me to alter. I feared that, in some way, I had effectually annoyed you at last. I was savage, mad. You were further away than ever. I longed for you, craved to hold you just once in my arms—once, it wasn't much."

His words hurt her, they were so very sad. She wondered why she felt as though it were all a dream; suddenly she lifted her eyes to his, and smiled, laying her hand softly on his knee.

And then something broke loose in him, his restraint gave way. A quick fear seized her for what she had accomplished by that simple touch. He leaned towards her—his eyes shining like stars in the faint light. She shuddered and drew away. A gasp which was almost a sob burst from her straining throat. His arms encircled her, his thin cheek was pressed for an instant against hers. The whole soul of the man seemed to leap from him to her. He muttered brokenly "Oh, God, must it be! when I love her so?" He seemed instinctively to guess what her answer would be. She felt his heart beating, and her own contracted with a great pity for him. She knew what he was suffering, this strange, reserved man, but she knew also, that after this night he would go back and take up his life and his duties like a man, and to-night would be to him as a dream. And she? Her tears, as they ran down her cheeks, fell on his, mingling with the spray dashing in over the side on to them.

His passionate cry died away. She murmured softly to him, and to herself:

"Me too, thy nobleness has taught
To master my despair.
The fountains of my hidden life
Are through thy friendship fair—"

"It is Mrs. Oliphant who says 'In all human aches and miseries, to be understood, is the one comfort above all others.'" And he knew that she understood all that he would say but couldn't. But who would understand her? Did she even understand herself?

* * * *

The bell rang—he loosened his arms; the paddle ceased its throb. The lights from the old tower streamed broadly over the waters of the little lock. The last sad words of the song sounded up from below—in yearning sweetness they floated away into the wild night.

"Oh! murmuring waters!
Flow on, ye have no voice for me—
Bear the wild songs of the hills
To the depths of the sea!
Bright stream from the founts of the West—
Rush on with thy music and glee—
Oh! to be borne to my rest
In the cold waves, with thee!"

* * * *

One evening, a few days later, as Peewit was going for a saunter before dinner, two letters were put into her hand. One glance at the envelopes made her quicken her steps till she reached a lonely hill overlooking the sea, and here she opened them. The first ran thus: "Just one line. I cannot write more. To tell you that I have fulfilled my obligations, and our marriage is to be in the new year. Please do not write and congratulate me."

The other was not much longer. It was from Aubrey.

"Peewit—Have you forgiven me? I want your forgiveness now. I am going to be married. Oh, Peewit, if only you had been stronger! Now it is too late. I hope we may never meet again. Your face haunts me. You are ever in my thoughts, but I know now you have forgotten me, and it is I who am weak, you who are strong, strong enough to tear from your heart a love that was unworthy. Good-bye, my little sweet!"

Enigmatical to the last, as his veiled, mysterious eyes! And the wan grey shadows came softly down the mountain-sides and wrapped themselves about Peewit. Her namesakes, far and near, were calling to one another with their plaintive human voices among the distant hills. The cry of the grouse cock rang harsh and shrill over the moorland wild. And still Peewit never moved. In the boom of the distant waves upon the shores somewhere far off and faint, she heard voices that in her ears would never sound again. The strong arm to fight life's battle, the human love to rest on—were not for her. Never now would she look into eyes that she loved, or rest her tired head against a heart that beat for her alone. Never—the heart in her own breast fluttered wildly for an instant, sending the red blood flying over her face and neck in hot waves, to leave her pale as sea-foam the next minute—never for her would sound the music of baby voices, nor her hand feel the clasp of tiny fingers!

But there stretched before her instead, long and lonely, the indefinite future of work, of life—of Eternity!

"Each life's unfulfilled, you see;
It hangs still, patchy and scrappy:
We have not sighed deep, laughed free,
Starved, feasted, despaired—been happy.

A Hidden Talent.

COMPLETE STORY.

By JANET A. McCULLOCK.

CHAPTER I.

"By and by, mother ; in a few months things may not be quite so bad. At least, I hope not."

"I hope so too, Ina," answered Mrs. Herbert. She looked round the large, shabby dining-room of Reffenham with a sigh as she spoke.

"Signor Cavalo says I need nothing now but a rest and moderate practice. Sir John said that too, the last time he heard me. Who knows but I may do better than they think, mother dear, when I make my *début* in spring," the girl said, eagerly.

"If you are sure of yourself, Ina ; if the nervousness you suffered from does not return. *Are* you sure of yourself ?" The mother's voice was wistful.

"Sometimes I feel as though I could do anything, mother, even before an audience of hundreds, and then again, I dread facing but two or three people. The bracing air of home for the next six weeks may restore all my nerve. Signor Cavalo says I have so much strength and expression that I need not fear," the girl replied.

"All is in your favour, Ina child ; let us hope for the best and the turning tide," said Mrs. Herbert.

But she sighed again, for evil times had come to the Herberts of Reffenham Hall. Law suits, mortgages, and wild courses of sons had woefully reduced the old squire, and now on a girl's frail shoulders rested the burden of toil for the redemption of the estate. And the slender reed might break, Ina might fail, and then the utter ruin of hope and home must assuredly follow.

"Go for your walk, dear ; take your father's message to Hammond at the mill," said Mrs. Herbert, and the girl hastened to obey with bright alacrity.

"Is Michael always the same, mother ?" she asked, as she tied on her mantle and bonnet.

"I suppose so, I have not seen him for years : not since the day he saved you when you fell into the river."

"What a fright I had to be sure." The young girl laughed as she turned to go, "Michael must have got a fright too, I yelled so vigorously. Good-bye, mother, if Michael is as sulky as of old, I shan't be long."

She made a pretty figure in the dull landscape of autumn tints, as she went through the faded fields. She soon struck the river path, and about a mile from the hall reached the place where the river parting its waters into two channels, swept round a long irregular island, uniting again a little further down. On the island was the mill and the miller's house. She crossed the narrow drawbridge and tiny garden, noting how little changed the place was since she had seen it last. The old woman who came at her summons showed her into a room to wait. It was evidently the owner's sitting-room, and Ina looked round curiously—very untidy, but very clean it was, books scattered all about, one or two pieces of massive silver-plate on the old oaken buffet shining in the firelight. She opened one of the books on the table, and was amazed to find it a collection of Italian sonatas, a rare edition, beautifully printed. Something else caught her eye, a half closed case on the ancient settle by the fire. Curious and wondering, she raised the lid, and her astonished gaze rested upon a magnificent violin, whose priceless value her musical studies enabled her to judge. Almost unconsciously she lifted it, and laying it against her shoulder drew the bow over the strings, a passionate rapture filling her soul as the clear, pure notes responded. Where had Michael Hammond, the surly miller, the "bogie man" of her childhood, found this treasure? Scarce knowing what she was doing, she began to play the grand symphony she had lately been practising. So lost was she to outward things that not until the final note died away did she become aware of someone watching; a tall man with a dark unsmiling face stood in the shadow, his gaze fixed upon her.

"Play that again," he commanded, and still under the spell of the wonderful instrument, dominated by the power in the man's face, she complied.

Then suddenly abashed at her own boldness, she held violin and bow towards him, faltering out, with burning cheeks,

"Oh! forgive my rudeness, do you play this sweet old violin?" and she smiled timidly.

For answer he took it and began to play, while with hands clasped, hardly daring to breath, she listened. Never had she heard

music like this ; the great tears welled up and fell unheeded as the violin sang, and laughed, prayed and wailed under the hand of a master ; note for note, bar for bar, he repeated what she had just played ; but oh ! not like her. Never, never, she knew, should she play like *that*. In her secret soul she felt that great as her talent was, it was far inferior to the gift bestowed on this rugged man, who could make the instrument *live* at his touch. As he finished and stood before her with downcast eyes and impassive face, she forgot all her old fear and dislike, forgot herself entirely. Springing forward, she grasped his arm impulsively.

"Michael, Michael, you must teach me," she cried, "you must help me to do better than I have ever yet done. Oh, Michael, say that you will teach me ! say that you will let me come and practice with you—say that you will."

He raised his eyes and regarded her steadily, but she showed no signs of the old childish dislike ; her eyes were eager, questioning, imploring. A curious softening of the hard face began, the stern lines faded slowly out.

"Yes, I will help you—you may come," he said, quietly. And Ina's heart swelled with gratitude as she thanked him.

CHAPTER II.

"MICHAEL, Signor Cavalo, my tutor, and Sir John, the great composer and conductor, are coming down to examine me ; you know that my *début* is fixed for the grand concert next month. I can never get through without you. Say that you will come up to the Hall to play with me, as they cannot come here. Do, please, come, Michael, for the sake of my future."

"For that reason, Miss Ina, I will come. But I don't want to see your fine friends, they are nothing to me, or I to them. Let me come and go quietly, and I will play with you."

"Oh Michael, how good you are ! You can do just as you please about it. Come at seven, they are to hear me just after dinner. I am going up to London for the last trials next week."

"Yes, I know ; I will come punctually, Miss Ina," and Ina went her way, praying that her innocent little scheme might be successful, while Michael worked far into the night to make up for lost time.

Ina and Michael played their best, not a single note misplaced or false. The corner where they stood was brilliantly lighted; all the rest of the large room where the listeners sat, was dark. As Michael laid down his violin, Sir John hastened up excitedly.

"Mr. Hammond, you are a genius; let me shake your hand sir. You must not—you *dare* not bury your precious talent. You must come to London with Miss Herbert; together you will take society by storm. A great, a magnificent future is before you; it would be a crime to remain here when fame and fortune are at your feet."

Michael had drawn himself up to his full height, and listened quietly, making no attempt to interrupt the excited little musician. But now he spoke.

"Fame and fortune!" he repeated, with intense scorn. "That was what a great composer like you said to my grandfather, whose violin this is. My grandfather believed and went, only to return a brokenhearted, beaten man, to die in obscurity. He was a far better player than I, and he failed. No, Sir John, fame and fortune are not waiting for me. I am not the sort that take defeat well; so I shall not risk it. I shall stick to my mill."

And though Sir John and the Italian urged him vehemently, though Ina's eyes pleaded wistfully, he was firm. So it came to pass that in a few weeks time Miss Herbert had departed for her final lessons in London, and Michael was working on calmly, day by day, in Reffenham mill, or playing alone at night.

But somehow the old zest had gone from his solitary practisings, the joy was less. He would often lay the dear old violin down, and gaze into the dying embers, while he wondered vaguely what might have happened had he given in to Sir John and gone to London. Miss Herbert would be a success he was sure, but yet *he* might have done his part too. Then he would shake himself angrily, and resume playing.

"I am forty, what have I got to do with dreams of fame and fortune?" he would ask himself bitterly. "There is nothing for me, fool that I am, but the old life and the old loneliness."

Thus he argued; but as the slow days passed, the thought of all that he might have achieved, of all that might have been, had he yielded, gnawed at his heart with a fierce pain for which there was no alleviation.

CHAPTER III.

LONDON SOCIETY was in a flutter, its musical circles were on tip-toe of expectation over the young artiste who was to appear at the grand concert on the tenth. Rumours were rife ; her beauty, youth, and wonderful gift were discussed on all sides. For the moment she was the all-absorbing interest, and Signor Cavalo was jubilant, Sir John quietly satisfied. Ina had gone on steadily during these last lessons, for some time she had shown neither nervousness nor distrust of her powers, all was as it should be. But with the third and last week of training a change came—a change known only to herself, recognised with horror and despair.

"My nerve is going ; I shall fail utterly," she cried in her heart, all the anguish of the situation forced upon her in its full terror. "Oh ! if Michael had only come with me to help me, or if he had never helped me at all, I should not have felt like this. Oh ! what shall I do !—how can I tell Sir John ? "

But with the strange courage born of the very lack of it, she hid her sufferings, and though the old musician sometimes looked at her with a queer expression on his kindly, puckered-up face, he gave no outward sign of any discovery of her real state, nor showed the slightest distrust of her success.

"You have done wonders, my dear," he told her, the day before her ordeal, "you will get through brilliantly. I know you will have a great triumph, such as you do not expect," and he smiled encouragingly.

He walked away, his hands softly rubbing each other, and she lay back in her chair, covering her face.

"How can I tell him when he has done so much for me ? but oh ! I am glad mother will not see my sure failure," she moaned to herself.

The Concert room was packed, the whispering of women, the rustling of fans and programmes made a subdued murmur. In front, in his conductor's chair, sat Sir John, grave and calm as usual, only a keen eye could have detected the anxious glance he cast now and then at the side door. The orchestra had ended the overture, a celebrated tenor was filling the hall with melody, when an attendant handed a scrap of paper to Sir John. He rose quickly and disap-

peared, for the next performer would be Ina, and he was to lead his protégé on to the platform. He made his way to the front entrance, but a few minutes after was at her dressing-room door. She came out at once, and he started at sight of her ghastly face.

"Sir John, I cannot go on," she gasped, "I am quite unfit to appear. My nerve has given way, I cannot play."

"Nonsense, my dear," he said, cheerfully. "You will be all right once you begin. I am sure of it: trust me, and come. What would Mr. Hammond say if he knew you meant to break down?"

"I wish I had never played with him; he was so strong, I leant upon him and forgot myself. Or if he had come with me, there could have been nothing but triumph for us both to-night," she said, sadly.

"There is triumph, my child," he answered as he led her round to the platform, though not by the usual way. Half-fainting she mounted the few steps with him, but as she reached the top she paused with a low cry of joy. Standing in the wing, quite out of sight of the audience, but in full view of the occupant of the platform, was a familiar figure. With violin already in rest, and bow poised over its string, Michael stood ready, she knew for what. A sudden transformation passed over the girl, her trembling limbs grew steady, her cheeks glowed, her terrified look vanished like magic. There was no time for greeting, but their eyes met in one swift glance as with firm step, and quiet self-possession, she crossed to her place. A peculiar smile hovered round the old musician's mouth as he noted the glance and the change in her.

"I thought that would do it," he muttered, as leaving the radiant young débutante standing alone, he took up his position at the other wing opposite to that silent, attentive figure.

But Ina needed no help from Michael. Clear, sweet, and faultless rose the notes of the majestic concerto, flooding the room with matchless harmonies; not a whisper breaking its flowing periods till the close. Then the audience rose *en masse*. Amid the thunders of applause, the loud cries of "encore," and shower of bouquets, Sir John led her off, straight up to Michael.

"Mr. Hammond you have secured Miss Herbert's success," he said, "I knew your presence would restore her lost nerve. Thanks for your prompt response to my request. But your hidden talent must be hidden no longer, you cannot return to Reffenham; you are

needed here." With a nod he hurried away, and the two, left together, looked into each other's faces earnestly, then Ina held out her shaking hands.

"You have saved me and Reffenham," she said in low, broken tones. "Oh Michael! I could never—never have braved this ordeal alone. I never shall be able to do it without you. Don't, no don't! leave me any more."

He took those slender hands in his own strong ones that trembled a little too, and looked steadily into the blue eyes that were full of such innocent, loving gratitude. And all the tenderness and faithfulness of a true, manly heart shone in the depths of his own.

"No dear, I never will," he answered, simply.

A Bunch of Forget-me-Nots.

By W. ALF. ALLAN.

THE breakfast room at the "Saxons," was bright and warm; a striking contrast with the cold and foggy November day.

As Dorothy Hunter sipped her coffee, there came a knock at the door, which caused her face to blanch. Slowly the door opened, and the servant came into the room with a letter which the postman had just brought. Dorothy opened the letter with trembling hands, and drew forth a small piece of paper, from which there dropped a dried and faded bunch of Forget-me-nots. On the paper was written the words: "The Editor regrets that he cannot accept your kind offer."

With a half suppressed moan, she sank down into the easy chair by the side of the table, and hid her face between her hands, while the piece of paper with the fatal words fluttered to the carpet. For some moments there was silence in the room; then Dorothy stooped and picked up the withered spray, and as she held it between her fingers, memory brought back to her the history of that spray. She was walking again with Jack Hunter by the side of a tiny brooklet that ran windingly through the charming glen of Lidford. She feels him pressing that spray, with others, into her hand, whilst on her lips lingers the kiss of their betrothal.

Again she read the brief note, and examined the address written upon the envelope. It was clear that it had come from her husband, Jack Hunter, editor of "The Post." He had written her with his own hand, and so there was no doubt attached to the missive.

Dorothy had never suspected for a moment that his love could change so suddenly into hate. Even when belief in his real affection for her had at times been a little shaken, she was still confident that Jack loved her sincerely. The idea of love's failure under trial had never entered her mind.

Alone with her thoughts, she recalled the past three years of her married life. Jack Hunter was nine years older than herself. His breadth of intellectual vision, and strong fertile brain, his successes and achievements, had made his request a kind of condescension on his part. He was a man worshipped and flattered by all, to whom many a noble woman would have gladly plighted her faith. Yet with all his marked ability and talent, he had stooped to ask the unknown Dorothy Fairfax to share his fortunes.

Again and again he had told her that she was necessary to his happiness, and without her, life would be robbed of all its charms for him. And she, in return, loved him with her whole heart.

But since their marriage, Jack Hunter had changed. There was a coldness in his manner towards her. The woman's soul was athirst, and day by day she grew more dissatisfied and discontented. The bright picture which Dorothy had drawn, peopled with imaginary successes and gay with social and intellectual triumphs, faded rapidly, and gave place to bitterness and disappointment. Instead of entering into the gay social gatherings of the day, she was penned up in the "Saxons." To make matters worse, her husband was often away for weeks together. The demands of business and the task of editing the "Post," engaged his whole time. His work lay amidst the turmoil of city life, while his house was situated some fifteen miles from the metropolis.

Dorothy Hunter simply loathed the "Saxons," and often, when gazing out upon the world from the seclusion of her home, longed for the gaieties of life, which she fancied were within easy reach. She sighed for freedom; the dreariness of her country home added to her dissatisfaction, while the fancy that she had been wronged by Jack Hunter grew apace. At last the spirit of revolt changed the submissive wife into a defiant and resolute woman. Seclusion led her to indulge

in morbid fancies, and she told herself that her marriage with Jack Hunter was a huge mistake; that he looked upon her, not as a wife, but the plaything of an hour, to amuse himself with when tired of the world. The endeavours to make herself worthy of his devotion, and the development of a literary taste, seemed no longer objects worth striving to attain. Dorothy thought these things only served to make her an instrument for promoting her husband's fame, that he simply required her for that—only that. Such imaginings hardened her heart, and the affectionate wife of a few fleeting months, became a distempered woman.

Jack Hunter was painfully conscious of the change, but he did not complain, nor show, in any way, how it cut him to the heart. Like many others, her idea, that he had altered in his affection towards her, was purely an act of imagination, for his love for Dorothy still ran as a golden thread through his life. He had, however, overlooked the fact, so often lost sight of, that she, with a true woman's nature, needed the frequent assurances of his devotion.

Jack Hunter was filled with vague doubts and misgivings. He thought that she was disappointed in him, and was regretting her mistake; that Dorothy had tired of his presence and affection, never suspecting that his long and continued absences were the cause of the change.

These thoughts threw a gloom over his life. His wife's coldness engendered in him a chronic hopelessness and melancholia. Between husband and wife the dark chasm of despair grew apace. The climax of their wretchedness was reached at last. He had been absent a week, and had returned with the news that he was going to Germany, to complete a work he had on hand. To Dorothy Hunter, the idea was unbearable. She poured out all her grievances, and many were the bitter things she said; words, which in a quieter moment she would not have uttered. Restraint was swept away, and feeling over-set. She accused him of unfaithfulness and desertion; that he had taken a mean advantage of her youth, in forcing her into marriage, and that he was false.

Jack Hunter listened patiently to the end. He did not show how deeply her words wounded him.

"Are you insane, Dorothy?" he interposed at last. "Do you know what you are asking for? Now be a woman and not a baby."

"Let me go! Let me go away from you!" she said; "I'm tired of it all."

"You can please yourself; go or stay. There shall be no regrets on your part. I mean it."

With these words he went out of the room. He had returned to the "Saxons" with jaded spirits, and this request of his wife had irritated him.

There are in all lives the ebb and flow of human passion. Jack Hunter became suddenly repentent. With the air of a suppliant, he returned to his wife, and spoke calmly and gently to her. He pleaded with Dorothy, and portrayed vividly what the consequences would be if she carried out her intentions; but she remained indifferent to all he said. Not for the sake of the world's opinion would she give up her proposed liberty. Freedom from Jack Hunter was her cry, and this she would have.

To the last, he tried to smooth the way to reconciliation, but found it futile. For Dorothy's sake alone, he suggested that she should return to her father's house for a time, so as to avoid ill-natured gossip and scandal.

She was now busy with her packing. Jack Hunter had returned to London, crestfallen and sad. Gladness and gloom were striving for mastery in her heart, but as gloom in all life is the stronger, her gloomy thoughts prevailed. A sense of remorse stole over her, as she questioned whether Jack was really as resigned as he seemed. What would he feel, thought she, when he again entered the "Saxons" and found her gone for ever? Then again, who would manage the house in her absence, and attend to his comfort? There will be a lot of waste, not to say expenses, she reflected.

Dorothy took up a packet of love letters, which Jack had sent to her before their marriage. Tied up with them was a dried-up bunch of Forget-me-nots, which he had picked for her, now so long ago. For the past two years, Dorothy had not read any of these epistles, but this morning a yearning for some sentiment of the old days came over her. Page after page she read eagerly, for the letters were those of a passionate, devoted lover. In fancy the past returned to her; Dorothy saw past events in a clearer light than before, the old love came back to her again. Jack Hunter was once more the idol of her life. A great sob rose in her throat as she realised what had come between them. Dorothy knew that he had been true to her, and that she had mis-

trusted him. If she could but speak to him again ; she longed to throw herself into his arms, and ask him to forgive her. If she wrote at once to the office of "The Post," he would get her letter before starting for Germany, and she would receive his reply—perhaps, he would come back again before he sailed from England.

With tremulous hands, she poured out on paper all the remorse that filled her, keeping nothing back. Dorothy told him everything, and begged him to forgive her. Within the letter she placed a spray of Forget-me-nots. It was a reminder of the past, and was sent to plead for her.

This was the answer she had received to her suppliant letter—the return of the spray, with the terse sentence, cold and distant : "The editor regrets that he cannot accept your kind offer."

Again she took up the note which had been sent in reply to hers. Dorothy's heart was filled with a great despair.

"Jack ! Jack ! forgive, forgive your foolish wife," she cried.

Her position came vividly before her. She was a forsaken woman, forsaken by the man who had sworn to be true to her.

All hopes of reconciliation were now gone, and she must leave the "Saxons." Should she plead once more ? No ; she would not humiliate herself again. She would go away into some distant part of the world, where Dorothy Hunter would be unknown. By some means she would eke out a living. She would take up her studies in painting, and with this idea in her mind, she finally decided to go to Paris.

She left the house on the following day, with the intention of crossing the channel from Dover. Before leaving, however, she wrote Jack Hunter, in reply to his curt message, to say she had taken him at his word, and had gone to Paris.

Dorothy Hunter journeyed to London, and not to Dover as she had planned. The feeling of deserting him was too strong for her. She resolved to see him once again before she left England for ever.

Before the day was over, Dorothy had taken apartments in a side street. Her landlady had been a woman of independent means, who had fallen in the world. Mrs. Fabian, the new lodger, was a "most remarkable, sedate and secluded person." Dorothy's friendlessness was noticed by Mrs. Thomson, who, like most of her class, jumped to a wrong conclusion.

Here in the seclusion of her rooms, Dorothy Hunter passed many a

weary day. She had adopted the name of "Fabian," thinking that such a name would help the sale of her pictures.

Amid the hurry and bustle of the city life, she heard now and then of her husband's doings. Months had passed since she deserted the "Saxons," and now Dorothy had no wish to be with him again. She was content. One day she almost touched him in the crowded Strand. He did not see her. Like one suddenly changed into a statue, she stood unable to speak, and watched the retreating figure till the surging mass of London traffic hid him from her.

In her heart there came again the old imperishable love for him, for the man whom she had aged, whose hair she had tinged with grey, and whose life she had darkened.

With the words "Jack, my Jack, forgive," she ran after him. About her all was a whirl and confusion. Hundreds of eyes looked into her face as she sought Jack Hunter. Down the Strand she ran as if insane. Jack Hunter crossed the road. Dorothy saw him. She had almost overtaken her husband, and the word "Jack" was upon her lips, when suddenly there was a scream from the passers-by. A carriage attached to a pair of grey horses had run over a woman, who now lay insensible in the arms of a policeman. It was Dorothy.

For days Dorothy Hunter lay at death's door, but by degrees she recovered from the shock.

One evening she was leaning listlessly against the mantelpiece in her little room, when there came a knock at the door. Mrs. Thomson walked into the room for a *tête-à-tête*. The landlady had made it a practice since Dorothy had become an invalid, to spend a few hours of cheery talk with her two or three times a week. Their conversation turned from one thing to another, till the subject of literary effort was discussed. Mrs. Thomson had written much in her time, but like many aspirants her labours had been fruitless. In fact it was three years ago since she had sent anything to the press for acceptance. On that occasion something most extraordinary had occurred. Instead of receiving the editor's compliments with her returned MS., she received a letter, which, as she remarked, had been from that day to this a mystery to her.

"How very singular," said Mrs. Fabian.

"Yes, very, and do you know, Mrs. Fabian, I have felt guilty ever since I received it, because it was not mine. I can't understand what it could have meant. You shall see it."

Mrs. Thomson rose from the chair and went out of the room. In a short time she returned with an old-fashioned box, and lifting the cover, she took from it the letter in question.

Dorothy took the letter, and almost immediately uttered a cry, for it had come from the editor of the Post. It was dated November 18, and was in Jack Hunter's handwriting.

She read on and on to the end, then with eyes filled with tears, she cried :

"Mrs. Thomson, you have done very wrongly in keeping back a letter never intended for you; this is my letter—mine, mine! You have kept it for three years, knowing it was not yours, and you have kept me from my husband for three long years."

"Forgive me, dear Mrs. Fabian. I never thought it could be of such importance," replied the agitated landlady.

"I can't! I can't," wailed Dorothy, as she again read the words:—

"You have brought sunshine to my life again. My darling, I thank you, oh so much, for your kind words. I love you the same as ever, my Dorothy, and shall for all eternity. Yes, I forgive you, if there is anything to be forgiven. Let us trust each other better, and never again speak of that wretched night, and of the words we said. Excuse more till I see you in two days. I return the spray, as a reminder is unnecessary to me, while you are the star of my life."

In the rush of the editor's room this letter had been put into the wrong envelope, and consequently Dorothy had not received his forgiveness till now, after many years of suffering and pain.

With a shaking hand she wrote him as from the dead, for he had searched all Paris for her, but in vain, and told him the same old story which is spoken every day.

* * * *

The weary and long years of separation were over. She was in her husband's arms, with her head resting peacefully upon his shoulder.

"Dorothy! Dorothy, did I really make such a mistake?"

With a whisper she replied, "Yes, Jack, you did, but it was all my fault."

Our Girls and their Amusements.

By ALICE CLARKE WHITE.

THERE was once a schoolgirl who was asked by a benevolent visitor "What do you do in your play-time, my dear?" "Why, we amuse ourselves." "And how do you amuse yourselves?" "Oh—I don't know." Immediate collapse on the part of the well-intentioned visitor followed, who was unprepared to face the difficulties to which this answer led, and who forthwith sat down to meditate.

Perhaps this, on the face of it, particularly unsatisfactory answer, was only apparently so, and the young lady may have meant that the ways and means of passing her brief holiday hours were too numerous to detail, and altogether beyond her immature powers of description. This view we should consider, from personal observation and experience, to be the right one, rather than that carried away by the sadder if not wiser visitor, who, to this day, believes that the modern damsel's idea of enjoyment is to sit in a corner with one or two chosen companions and giggle.

In the days when our good Queen Victoria was a girl, the amusements indulged in by young ladies were, we are authoritatively informed by our elders widely different (by which they mean "superior") to those familiar to the present generation.

The pupils of Miss Pinkerton's Academy walked sedately, two and two, along the Mall at Chiswick, beginning with the greatest and dwindling down to the least, like the animals in pictorial representations of Noah's Ark. Or they played the mildly exhilarating game of battledore and shuttlecock in the garden when the weather permitted, and blindman's buff indoors if it proved inclement. This latter, however, was considered rather vulgar for young ladies, and the Principal (there were no head mistresses in those days), preferred her young charges to work off their superabundant energy with "Cross Questions" and "Proverbs," the propriety of which the most censorious could not question. Open air amusements were almost unknown to our grandmothers, with the exception of riding and driving, and these, of course, could only be enjoyed by a few. The unfortunate

middle-class young lady of sixty years ago was very badly off indeed in the matter of recreation, and we can only hope, for her own sake, that she was not aware of the want. At the same time we must remember that the fashions of the day in dress were quite sufficient to seriously handicap any girl in the pursuit of amusement, whether outdoor or indoor. What has tennis in common with a poke-bonnet, or cycling with crinoline? Clearly nothing, and the votaries of "the mode" in those dark ages contented themselves with a decorous saunter about an archery ground, where the maximum of exertion required barely ruffled the drooping curls of the fair toxophilites. Later on, croquet enlisted a noble army of recruits among those who had leisure and a lawn on which to perambulate, though, if we may judge from "Punch's" illustrations of the period, the attitudes presented during the game by the wearers of unsympathetic and unaccommodating crinolines could scarcely be called graceful.

Nous avons changé tout cela. The modern girl is probably hardly grateful enough for her escape from the thralldom of hoops and their attendant evils. She is so used to swinging along in all the freedom of short skirts lightly and easily hung from a sensible waist that she almost forgets the fact that only a year or two ago her pleasant indemnity from steel trembled in the balance, and only the determined opposition of an "enlightened majority" (in this case) sufficed to banish the detestable thing—for ever let us hope.

That there is a necessity for touching on these points of fashion and costume is obvious when, as already stated, we see woman's physical development encouraged by a more rational dress, and fostered by a corresponding intellectual progress, and note that these have been the factors chiefly concerned in widening the field of her enjoyments. No athletics were possible to a young lady whose corsets were laced behind by a sort of tourniquet arrangement, applied when the hands had done their utmost to compress refractory inches; a comparative emancipation from the tyranny of tape was absolutely necessary before a girl could emulate her brothers in any of their sports and pastimes, after which her soul had long yearned, and as nothing is ever accomplished at once, least of all, perhaps, a radical change in the theory and practice of dress, that department of feminine inventiveness called fashion which is always threatening us with variety that may be welcome but is just as likely to be unnecessary, should be carefully watched and rigorously criticised if we are to enjoy in the

future as much indemnity as we do at present from all that is stiff, uncomely, and in the nature of an incubus.

Till she arrives at the delectable period of long frocks and tied-up hair, there is very little difference in the amusements of girls and boys. In the nursery they are shared equally by brothers and sisters, nor do the latter scorn attendance in the field where the first principles of cricket are being applied with a broken handled bat and a tennis ball. Side by side the mysteries of sliding, skating, climbing, etc., are acquired, and it is only when she is reluctantly forced by a strong, not-to-be-trifled-with expression of opinion from sisters, cousins, and aunts, as well as a long-suffering mamma, that she unwillingly abandons the more masculine pursuits of her brothers and takes up the milder diversions permitted to her sex alone, which nowadays are growing beautifully less in number.

Perhaps the youthful feminine heart turns towards tennis more fondly than to any other out-door game, owing, it may be, to the fact that tennis courts are more easily accessible than golf links or cricket fields—and many of our girls have but scanty leisure for any amusement that is difficult of attainment. Tennis requires less space for operation than most other games, needs no particular dress, is quickly learned, and can be enjoyed by fewer players. It may be also that the active exercise of the game, which calls all the muscles of the body into play, renders it more attractive than others on that account. Even town girls can enjoy tennis, for an asphalted square or garden is quite as good as turf, while it has besides the distinct advantage of being always in good condition for play, a condition certainly not shared by a grass lawn after a heavy shower of rain. Another feature of tennis is its popularity with all classes of the community. Not only the classes but the masses enjoy it. Witness the numerous tennis grounds in our parks and gardens, laid out and supported by local rates or the County Council, and also the clubs instituted among nearly all the important firms employing a large number of young men and women. As an athletic exercise it is unrivalled, of course within the bounds of moderation, and doctors are almost unanimous in recommending it for the various forms of dyspepsia and liver complaints which nowadays, alas, attack even our juveniles.

For those girls fortunate enough to possess a large-hearted paterfamilias, or the almost equally fortunate young women who devote their energies to business and the profits that arise therefrom, the

bicycle affords delightful recreation nearly the whole year round. The more confident and self-possessed among them even thread an intricate course through the crowded city or West-end streets on their way to the daily grind, braving the dangers of hurrying hansoms and unmanageable omnibuses, to say nothing of the crowds of determined pedestrians who are blind and deaf to anything that interferes with their rush office-wards. A fair cyclist, neatly dressed and booted, sitting her machine with all the ease and freedom that belongs to woman alone, and "doing a spurt" along a country road at a pace that would not discredit any of the sterner sex, is a pleasant sight, for it reminds us that the distinction between what is proper for men and improper for women is a gradually diminishing factor, and only the straitlaced adherents to a bygone order of things now protest that healthy exercise is "unwomanly." But, after all, the "unwomanliness" of any recreation depends altogether on the way it is practised, not on the amusement itself; just as there are dancers, whose every movement is suggestive and voluptuous, and others who present only the highest ideal of grace and beauty. Croquet, which was considered eminently "ladylike" and above all reproach (degenerate moderns have been heard to call it "slow") could be rendered unwomanly, or, as our French critics dearly love to say, "shocking," if the player chose to make it so by an undue display of ankle and crinoline. Evil is to those who think evil, after all, and if cycling has ever merited the charge of being an unbecoming pastime for women, the reason surely lies with some few of its votaries, who, with more zeal than discretion, have arrayed themselves in strange garments as yet unauthorised by Mrs. Grundy, and which experience has proved are not all necessary in riding, either for speed or distance.

Women with leisure seem of late to have taken to a strangely mournful pursuit called golfing, an amusement, if anything so solemn may have the term applied to it—that demands a steady hand and a quick eye, combined with good walking powers and a serenity of disposition that missing balls and obtrusive strangers cannot ruffle. Of course the fresh bracing air of the links is exhilarating, and pleasant conversations and flirtations can be carried on without much interruption, but the charm of the game appeals, one would think, rather to the middle-aged and contemplative, than to the young and active of either sex.

The same criticism applies to such sports as angling and sea-

fishing, both of which have enthusiastic votaries among women; indeed, one or two of our Princesses are adepts in the use of rod and line, and expert salmon fishers. Nothing perhaps is so significant of woman's advance than this adoption of a pursuit so essentially masculine, and which, together with shooting, rowing, and mountaineering, is entirely an outcome of the last few decades, the very thought of which, as participating in themselves, would have been regarded as revolutionary by our grandmothers.

It is difficult of course to lay down any law as to the suitability or the reverse of certain sports for women, and which, as such, come within the scope of this paper. Suitability depends, generally speaking, upon the individual, not the class, and a young woman of good physique is able to endure the fatigue and discomfort of sports which tax the strength of a good many men. That this proves little we admit, for it must be allowed that the girls of really good physique are somewhat exceptional, while the reverse is true of men. Again, it should not be forgotten that such pursuits as angling, fishing, hunting and shooting, inflict suffering needlessly, and are, therefore, demoralising. The keener sensibilities and sympathies of women should, and usually do, render them strongly averse to anything which entails lingering pain, to say nothing of maddening terror, upon the unfortunate victims of their skill, and undoubtedly when a woman finds excitement—I will not say pleasure—in winging birds and laming rabbits and hares, and sees unmoved the ruthless butchery of a fox, her womanly sympathies must be blunted, and the result will be a growing indifference to suffering and a selfish disregard of anything that interferes with her own pleasure. Surely there can be little divergence of opinion on this question of women and sport, but even if it is at present indulged in by those few only whose wealth and leisure give them facilities for joining men at covert and meet, even then both that wealth and leisure are misspent in such pursuits which are a stumbling-block to weaker sisters who follow fashion wherever it may lead, and into whatever paths it may wander.

Women who hunt and shoot generally drive, and, as a rule, are excellent judges of horseflesh. Some of our best coach and tandem drivers are women, and it is astonishing what nerve, pluck, and wrists of steel are possessed by these ladies. Coach-driving is anything but easy under favourable conditions, with a heavy vehicle behind and a pair of leaders who seem determined to have a good

time in their own way—generally widely different to the ideas of the other pair in the matter. Along a good level high road these idiosyncrasies can be met and humoured, but when there is a hilly bit, up or down—but especially down—all the driver's skill, nerve and strength are needed to keep the team well in hand, but not too consciously so, for a thoroughbred resents the curb as much as the whip. Ticklish corners, too, lie in wait for the unwary, and the best of coachmen must have all their wits about them to safely guide both horses and coach between the Scylla and Charybdis of a high bank to the right, and a nasty bit of obtrusive railing to the left, with only a yard or two of superfluous space to steer in. It speaks volumes for women's nerve and courage when these and other dangers are met and overcome with a skill equal to that of any driver of the masculine sex.

Some years ago, when the "bloomer" scare was upon us, "Punch" caricatured, in its good-humouredly prophetic way, the coming woman who would drive the 'buses, cabs, and carts of the day, clad in semi-masculine attire, high hat and all. The prophecy is only partially realised as yet, but the box-seat of many a four-in-hand reveals an apparition that would awaken joy in the heart of the old caricaturist. For there sits the new woman as on a throne—immaculately got up in deerstalker, high collar, cravat, coat and waistcoat, and, when a rug is drawn over her knees, there is nothing to betray her sex, unless it be the smoothness of her cheeks, and that glory of woman—a wealth of hair—tucked under her hat behind.

An old boatman is reported to have said that women would never make good sailors because, in an emergency, their first thought was always for the safety of gowns and hats, and their second for the danger, whatever it might be, that threatened them. This is distinctly humiliating to us as a sex, and the more so because there is generally a grain or two of truth in such statements. So far, however, they do not seem inclined to emulate masculine bravery in this direction, and confine their nautical ambition to occasional assistance in the management of a yacht or sailing-boat, and to lending a hand with an oar; but it may be safely affirmed, I think, that the form of amusement at sea most dear to woman's heart is walking the deck in a becoming yachting costume, or reclining thereon in a comfortable lounging chair with a novel to help while away the time.

Perhaps that delightful apostle of the sea breezes and wild coast

scenery, William Black, is responsible for the growing love of yachting, equally shared by men and women. No expedition is complete, indeed, without two or three serge-clad Tam-o'-Shantered figures, who, though they may not be good sailors from the old man-of-war's-men's point of view, can yet keep their "sea legs" and enjoy a whistling North Wester as much as any of the men on board. Neither are they more prone to sea-sickness than husbands and brothers, while, from a utilitarian point of view, their presence during a cruise obviates many of the unpleasant little accidents that will happen to buttons and socks, neckties and pocket-handkerchiefs, to say nothing of other more distinctly masculine garments.

Fresh water boating finds more favour with women generally, inasmuch as rowing, punting, canoeing, etc., are soon acquired, and can be practised with less interruption on rivers and lakes than on the sea, where rough, boisterous weather often prevents pleasure boating. It is by no means uncommon nowadays to see an outrigger "manned" by girls, skimming along in the most approved manner on the upper reaches of the Thames, the fair occupants, in white sailors' hats and jerseys, evidently enjoying the pleasant exercise to the full. Or you will come across a punt load of damsels lazily basking under sunshades while one of the number very deliberately walks up and down with the punting pole, displaying a prettily rounded arm and the neatest of white shod feet. A little further, and one meets Angelina in one canoe accompanied by Edwin in another, both sunburnt, loosely clad and happy—a sight to awaken an enthusiastic desire to go and do likewise in the heart of a youthful spectator, and to rouse a sigh of envy in the breast of the middle-aged.

Nature, it is evident, is not so unkind to women as men would have us believe; indeed, it is only the artificial side of her, now rapidly disappearing, that hinders a fuller indulgence in most of the sports enjoyed by men—those always excepted that are too violent, such as football and polo, or unfeminine (alas, that they should not be un-masculine also!) as the various forms of shooting, etc. She is keen-eyed, alert, and agile, and only in respect of endurance does she compare at all unfavourably with her masculine companions.

One is tempted in summarising to contrast the freedom of our sex in England to enjoy themselves as they please with the constraint imposed upon them in other countries—America and the Colonies excepted. No European nation regards its women exactly as we do,

with a well-balanced mixture of respect and *camaraderie*. On the contrary, she is treated rather as an unreasonable and irresponsible creature outside the domestic circle, and the few who venture to enjoy the sports and pastimes that form part of an English girl's everyday life, are either those in a position to defy scandal and criticism, or those to whom both are indifferent. Comment is needless, as newspaper writers are wont to remark when they don't know what to say. The freedom to choose and enjoy any healthy pleasure within their reach, together with a growing taste for rational amusement is undeniably a characteristic of the present age, and it must surely tend to a higher development of woman's physique, and conduce as well in a high degree to that happy consummation of moral and physical well-being which has been the dream of so many of our poets and novelists—a condition so aptly described by Ibsen as "*la joie de vivre*."

Smut.

By GERALD HAYWARD.

I.

SHE was a black-haired little thing, with large greenish-grey eyes. Her face, when not actually dirty, had generally a smudge or two on it, which had gained for her the nickname of Smut. She was a little wild street arab, living as best she could in the filthy court, where she was brought up by her hard-working mother, who had been deserted by her drunken husband, and left to earn a living for herself and her child. This she barely succeeded in doing by going out charing. By this means Smut was left most of the day to herself, so she ran wild, playing and fighting with the other children of the court. But a change was coming for Smut, which at first she did not at all appreciate.

One morning her mother said to her: "Now, Smut, you've got to go to school. A kind lady has offered to pay for your schooling, so you must just go."

But Smut, being a wilful little creature, replied: "I don't want no skeul. Billy Marks and Polly Warden don't go to no skeul; why should I?"

"Well, you mun jist go, likes or no likes," said the mother.

So after much coaxing and scolding, Smut was washed and cleaned, and put as tidy as her scanty clothing would allow, and marched off to see the lady. She was a benevolent, kind woman, who was connected with a charity school for waifs and strays. Hearing the woman's account of her little uncared-for daughter, she had been moved to offer to place Smut at this school, where she would be well taught and looked after.

So it came to pass that the arrangement was made that Smut was to go there at once. At first there were rebellion and tears, but at length, being really an affectionate child, she was won by the kindness of her teachers till she became obedient and tractable, and being naturally intelligent, soon became tolerably well educated.

As the years passed, Smut grew in form and beauty. She was, at the age of seventeen, a tall slip of a girl, with a slight, willowy figure, a graceful head with unruly black locks tossing about it, and the same large grey-green eyes now full of life and intelligence. Her mother was dead, and she had left school, and was employed in a large shoe factory in Southwark. Here, like many of her class, she lived the same monotonous life, week in and week out, her only recreation being an occasional treat on the Sunday, when funds were up, and a trip down the river in summer on her day off.

It was one of these occasions on which the event occurred which altered the whole course of her life, whether for good or ill remains to be seen.

II.

ONE summer morning, on one of those heavenly days which seem to have wandered from Paradise and forgotten the way back again, Gerald Eversley was sitting in his studio, idly putting the finishing touches to the picture on the easel before him. At length he threw away his brushes with a sigh, got up and lit a pipe, and strolled to the window which overlooked the Thames.

"By Jove! What a glorious morning. I think I'll go out for a

stroll," and then noting the steamers plying up and down the river, a thought struck him that he would go and have a penny ride on one of them. "Why not?" he said. "It looks cool and pleasant, and there's no telling, I might find 'it' there."

In order to understand this mysterious remark, we must take a peep into his life. He was a young artist of considerable talent, and had already had the good fortune to get one or two pictures accepted for the Academy. True, they were hung rather high, but no matter, he felt his foot was on the ladder that leads to fame. He was, at the present time, perplexed and restless about a picture he had conceived, but could not execute for want of a suitable model. He had tried several, but one was too fat, another too short. He was always on the look-out for his ideal model, and with this end in view, used to wander about in all sorts of places, but with no result. His friends used to chaff him about this, and ask him if he had found "it" yet. Hence, when on that summer morning he resolved to go for a trip on a penny steamer, and murmured he might find "it" there, it will be seen that he still had in his mind the ideal model for which he had been so long seeking.

Going out, he strolled down to the nearest landing stage, and took his ticket for some place down the river. Presently the little steamer came puffing alongside, and he went on board and selected a comfortable seat. He liked studying human nature, so he was much interested in watching his fellow passengers. They were of the ordinary type one meets with on river steamers.

He was looking lazily round him, wondering where they were all going, and speculating on what sort of lives they led, when his gaze was arrested by the sight of a girl, who was standing, looking with evident delight at the busy scene on the river. It was Smut, come for one of her outings. She was dressed, as most factory girls are, in a plain stuff dress, which showed her neat, trim figure to perfection. She had, on this occasion, provided herself with a white sailor hat, with a red ribbon, and had round her neck a red handkerchief. She had evidently an eye for colour, and knew what suited her dark beauty, and she was beautiful then. Her dark hair was swept back from her low brow and tied in a small knot behind. Her large green eyes were sparkling with delight; her cheeks were warm reddish brown, and her lips, slightly parted, showed a row of even, white teeth. Yes, she certainly was beautiful but seemed

unconscious of it. The pose of her supple figure, the rich, warm colour, her splendid eyes, all made a perfect picture of rich young life and beauty. Eversley's eyes were rivetted on her, taking in every detail of her face and figure.

"At last," he murmured. "At last I have found 'it'; there is the face and figure I want."

In his excitement he took a few steps forward towards the girl, when he reflected it would be impossible to take her by storm. So he approached her cautiously, and after standing by her side for some minutes, made some casual remark about the beauty of the morning, and the scene around them.

Now, Smut, though a child of the people, and accustomed to a rough, wild life, had a quiet dignity of her own, and resented being accosted by strangers, so she merely answered civilly and coldly in the affirmative. Eversley, determined not to lose his prize, made every effort to win her confidence. He treated her with the tact and deference he would have shown to one of his own order. At last the girl was impressed by his quiet, civil manner, and began to talk to him. He pointed out to her the various objects as they passed, and interested her in the scene around them. He thus gradually won the girl's confidence, till in a short time they were chatting away together as if they had been old friends.

The little steamer had long ago passed the place for which Eversley had taken his ticket. He took no heed of that; where she went, he was determined to go. He found out that she was going to Gravesend to spend the day there, so he immediately determined to go there too. When they arrived there, they went off the boat together. Then came the difficulty. He did not wish to force his acquaintance on her. Would she come with him? Then they could dine at some restaurant, and return together by the steamer in the afternoon. Smut hesitated at first, as she was not at all disposed to give herself away to this stranger. But he pleaded so hard, and seemed so pleasant, that at last she yielded. The end of it was, he had his way, and they strolled about together for hours, during which time he told her all about himself, his aims and ambitions, withholding the model question altogether. At the same time he elicited from her the story of her life.

"So you are called Smut," he said. "What a funny, quaint name—I like it."

"Do you?" the girl replied; "I think it a horrid name, but it has always stuck to me."

"But it just suits you," Eversley said. "It exactly describes your dark——" he was going to say "beauty," but thought better of it, as he did not wish to flatter her, so he substituted "complexion" instead.

As the day wore on, and he saw more of her, he became more and more impressed with the girl. Her beauty fascinated him, and her fresh, racy talk interested him. And she, on the other hand, was impressed by him, for Gerald could make himself very agreeable if he chose, and, moreover, could suit himself to his company, and could talk well on any subject. He told her all about his pictures and the work he was doing.

"Oh!" said Smut, "I do love pictures. I saw some in a gallery once; they were just lovely."

"Well you must come and see mine," said Gerald. "Now you must."

"Oh, that would be nice," she said.

At last, before parting, he extracted a promise from her that she would come on an appointed day to his studio, where he would show her his pictures.

"Well, good-bye, Smut," he said, at parting from her, "thanks to you, I have spent a delightful day."

"I have liked it too," she said simply. "Thank you for your kindness. Good-bye."

"Don't forget to come on Wednesday," he cried, as she moved away.

"I shall remember," she answered, and then became lost in the crowd of people passing over Westminster Bridge.

Eversley slowly wended his way home. He seemed in a dream, and paid little heed to things around him. He had found his model, and the conception of his picture could be carried out. "Found it, yes," he mused, "but can I obtain it?" He felt he would have some difficulty in persuading Smut to sit to him. He had realised she had a quiet obstinacy about her, and would not easily give way. But he did not care, he meant to try; the earthworks were taken, he would now attack the citadel itself.

When he arrived at his studio, he sat thinking over the events of the day. Then he analysed his feelings, and came to the conclusion

his joy consisted in having found his ideal. He admired Smut, and was interested in her, but no other feeling had taken possession of him. His whole heart and soul were in his work and he only saw in the girl the means by which he could realise the idea he had been so long contemplating. Without being very susceptible, he was not impervious to the charms of women. Women petted and flattered him, no doubt on account of his cleverness and good looks, but as yet, he was heart-whole. He certainly had had a few *affaires-de-cœur*, but they had all ended in a few letters and faded flowers, of which he had a drawer full. He was thinking over these now, then his thoughts returned to Smut.

"If I can only get her to sit to me, what a charming picture she will make." And he was soon absorbed in thinking out the details of his picture, and reflecting what would be the best method of gaining Smut's consent to be his model.

On the day and hour appointed she went to his studio, where some time was occupied in looking over Eversley's pictures. Smut's crude and honest criticisms of his work amused him greatly. They chatted for some time, when Eversley proposed they should have some tea. So Smut boiled the kettle while Eversley busied himself in getting the things ready. But all the while the model question was uppermost in his mind, and he was speculating how he could introduce it to her.

When they had finished tea, he lighted a cigarette, and began to talk about his work. "Now or never," he thought. "I will take the bull by the horns, though I do get gored for my pains." He then told of the idea of the picture he wanted to paint, but could not carry out his conception for want of a suitable model to sit to him.

"Oh, I know," said Smut, "models are them girls who come and stand naked before a man for a shilling an hour, while he paints them. The brazen huzzies! I've no patience with them."

This was not very encouraging, but Eversley hastened to explain that the picture he contemplated was not from the nude. "That is," he added, "it will be draped; have clothes on, I mean. The only part of the figure that will be bare will be the arms and neck, and possibly the feet, but those are mere details. Now," said Eversley, going on hurriedly, "I have been looking for a model for some time, but have not been able to come across the exact face and

figure I want. What I wish is, a girl who is tall and slim, with dark eyes and hair."

He looked furtively at her as he said these words, but though Smut was listening attentively to what he was saying, her face betrayed no sign that she imagined he was talking to her.

"I suppose," he said, "you don't know of any girl, Smut, amongst your acquaintances, who would like the work?"

"No," she said, "I don't. You see all our girls are at work, and wouldn't care for such a job as that." Then she added slowly: "Why, I wouldn't mind coming to you myself, if you promise that I shouldn't be undressed. But then, there's the work, I couldn't leave that."

"My dear little girl," cried Eversley, seizing her hand, "you are the very one I want. Directly I saw you, I knew I had found the model I wanted, if only I could persuade you to sit to me. And as to the work; why not leave it? I will find you suitable lodgings near here, and give you double the wages you get at the factory."

"Yes, that's all very well," said Smut, wise beyond her years, "till the picture is finished. I should then be out of work, and could get no employment."

"Oh, that will be all right," Eversley said, "with a face and figure like yours, you could get engagements among artists which would keep you for years. Besides," he went on, "I would see you were provided for, so you need not have any fears about the future."

So it came to pass, after much arguing and discussion, Eversley had his way, and it was finally arranged that Smut should leave the factory, and go to him as his regular model.

III.

SMUT had now been for some weeks Eversley's model, attending daily at his studio. He was making rapid progress with his picture, to the painting of which he gave his whole heart and soul. During those daily sittings, the acquaintance between Smut and Eversley, which had begun so strangely, had ripened into a firm friendship. He had grown to be very fond of his little friend; he liked her as a good comrade, and a pleasant companion, nothing more.

And Smut? Well, it is always a dangerous situation, at least for one of the parties concerned. Given, on the one hand, a girl with a warm and affectionate heart, and on the other, a man who was intelligent, sympathetic and kindly disposed towards his fellow creatures, and at the same time feeling grateful to the girl for the service she had done him, in being a means to an end. The result might have been foreseen. He was grateful, kind, friendly; but Smut? ah, that was a different question. She had learnt to love him with all the ardent love of her deep, affectionate nature, but she had striven so far to hide it from him.

On two occasions she nearly revealed the state of her feelings towards him. He took her out sometimes for a day's excursion into the country, or to the seaside, as a holiday from their work. What red letter days those were for Smut! To wander about with him by the seashore, or along some country lane; then dine together in the evening, listening to his conversation, feeling his presence. This, this was simply heaven to her. It was on one of these occasions he had been talking to her of their friendship, saying what a kind little companion she had been to him. Then he went on to say, "Ah, Smut, my dear, like all good things it must end. Some day there'll come across your path the man, who will be all the world to you, and who will win your heart for his own. Then you will forget all about your friend."

"I shall never do that," said Smut, quietly, and then added, before she hardly knew what she was saying, "I would rather have your friendship, than any man's love." Then, biting her lip, said, in a forced, gay manner, "What a mistake it is, don't you think, to like anything or anybody very much. You treasure them up in your heart of hearts, that little drawer I mean, of which only you have the key, when one fine day you find it empty, swept and garnished."

Eversley looked curiously at her, and was surprised at the hard, flippant tone with which she said the words, but said nothing, except to tease her about being a silly little goose.

On another occasion some few weeks later, on coming to the studio, she found Eversley very unwell, having caught a chill, so was quite unfit for work. He was sitting in an armchair by the fire, looking ill and wretched.

"Good morning, Smut. You will see I am not up to work to-day, so you will have a holiday."

"I am sorry," she said, "I think it is you who want a holiday, I am sure you have been working too hard lately."

"Perhaps you're right," he replied. "I must try and get away soon, as I think we both, as well as the picture, need a little rest. Oh, please don't go, Smut," he cried, as she prepared to depart. "You must stay and keep me company."

So she stayed and occupied herself in reading to him, attending to his wants, nursing him in fact as best she could. He felt the soothing influence of her presence, the charm of her natural, sympathetic nature. They had been chatting for some time, when on a sudden impulse he took her hand, and caressing it gently, said, "What a good little friend you have been to me, Smut. I can never forget your goodness. Why, I believe you wouldn't mind taking any trouble for me."

A wave of colour swept over Smut's face, and snatching her hand away she said, "Of course I wouldn't—trouble? Why! I would—" Then she stopped suddenly, she was going to say "die" for him, but controlled herself, and said quite quietly, "do anything I could to help you."

He little knew what an effort it was to her to speak thus, and what a pent up torrent of deep, and passionate love she was forcing back upon her heart. Nothing further passed, and at the end of the day when Smut went home, they both felt what a pleasant time they had spent together.

Smut did not see anything of Eversley for some time after this, as when he was convalescent, he went off for some weeks to pay a round of visits. It is strange, but to some people there seems to be vouchsafed a special premonition of coming disaster. When Smut said good-bye to Eversley, she felt a mysterious dread of coming trouble, which she could not shake off. She laughed at it at first, thinking she was morbid and depressed, but the indefinable fear which seemed to haunt her rather increased than diminished. She heard from Eversley occasionally, as he had promised to write, and sent her bright, amusing letters, full of his doings and visits. These interested her more than she could express. She waited for them, read them till she knew them by heart, and kept them as precious treasures. But all the time the phantom of coming evil haunted her, and she longed for his return, longed for his confidence, his cheery companionship, longed for his—No, no, that could never

be. She had tried so hard to stifle the feeling, but it would come surging up from her heart.

At length Eversley's return was expected. How Smut longed for it, yet she looked forward to their meeting with a strange mixture of pleasure and pain.

She received a few lines from him one evening, saying he was back and would like to see her the following morning. It was with a strange forboding that she went to the studio. A presentiment of coming trouble was heavy upon her. Eversley greeted her warmly, and was delighted to see her.

"Why, Smut," he said, "you look pale and worried. What's the matter? Been working too hard?"

"Oh, no, I'm all right," she replied. "I hope you have enjoyed your holiday, and are now quite well again."

"Oh, I've had a splendid time. I am ever so fit, and ready for any amount of work. By the way, Smut," he said, "I've some good news to tell you. Can you guess what it is?"

"No," the girl said, looking at him with questioning eyes.

"Well, I've met my fate, and am going to be married."

So the blow had fallen. This was the realisation of that vague and misty trouble which had been hanging over her. She went very white, and felt as if she were turned to stone, but feeling she must say something, controlling herself, said, "I wish you joy, Mr. Eversley. I sincerely hope you will be happy."

"Thank you, Smut. I knew you would be glad." Then he went on hurriedly, "but it won't make any difference to you, you know. I shall continue my work, and shall need your assistance."

"No," Smut said quietly, "I think you had better find another model, I am rather tired of the work. In fact, I wish to get some definite employment."

Eversley argued and reasoned with her, saying it would be too bad of her to throw him over, as she just suited him. But all to no purpose. Smut was quite firm. So, at last, seeing she had made up her mind to leave him, he said, "Well, I shall never forget you, Smut. You have been a good, faithful little friend to me, and if you insist on leaving me, you must allow me to find you a comfortable home and employment."

"No, thank you," she said, "I shall be able to get along all right by myself."

He was vexed and mortified at her refusal, but was determined all the same to show his gratitude to her. At last she rose to say good-bye, and as he took her hand, said "Farewell, little friend, you will come and see me sometimes, won't you?"

"I may be going some distance from here. There is no telling where I shall go—wherever I can find suitable work."

"Well," he said, "I must know how you get on. Promise me, Smut, that if you are ever in trouble or in difficulty, you will write to me. You must grant me that favour."

"Yes, I promise," she said, and then went quietly away.

Neither thought that they would never see each other again.

During the next few weeks Eversley was busy preparing for his marriage. He often thought of his little dark-eyed friend, and wondered where she was. He had made several attempts to find out where she had gone, but was unsuccessful. He was to know soon.

On going to his club one day, he found a letter addressed to him in a handwriting that was not familiar to him. On opening it, he found another letter enclosed, directed to him in Smut's writing. The first letter was from a doctor, saying he had been called in to attend a case down in Southwark, of a girl who had been poisoned. It appeared she had been suffering from neuralgia, the result, so the people with whom she lived told him, of worry. Something was on her mind, they said, and she seemed very depressed and wretched, and could get no rest day or night. Whether her death, continued the doctor, was the result of an overdose of laudanum, which she might have obtained to relieve the pain, or a case of suicide, he could not say. He was writing this to Mr. Eversley as the enclosed letter, directed to him, was found in the girl's pocket.

On reading this, Eversley was inexpressibly shocked, and sat with Smut's letter in his hand, in a dazed kind of way, without attempting to open it. He was thinking over the past. What friends they had been, how good and attentive she had always been to him. Poor little Smut—dead—and by her own hand. "Oh, no, no," he thought, "there was no reason; and yet he hinted it might be suicide. What had she done? he would never know. Then, taking up the letter, he broke the seal, and read as follows:—

"DEAR MR. EVERSLEY,

I can tell you now what perhaps you never guessed, I loved you with all my heart and soul. Life is unbearable without you, so I have determined to leave it. You have been a good kind friend to me. May you be happy.

Yours faithful,

SMUT."

Enclosed with the letter was a paper containing a long tress of dark hair. On reading Smut's letter Eversley was so overcome that he covered his face with his hands, and wept like a child.

In the Academy of that year the picture which Eversley had painted of Smut was much admired. People wondered who the beautiful dark girl, with the sad grey eyes, could be. But, all enquiries by his friends Eversley merely answered "One of my models."

He was offered on several occasions large sums for the picture, but he refused to sell it. He kept it as a reminiscence of his little dead friend. There was something else he kept too. In a secret drawer of his escritoire was Smut's letter, containing the lock of her hair. On the outside he had written, "The last token of a friend who was faithful unto death."

Sir Isaac Holden.

By SARAH CATHERINE BUDD.

Author of "MOZART," "HAYDN," "JOHANNES BRAHMS,"
etc., etc.

WHEN a young child in all its innocent joyousness is suddenly snatched away from the mother's side, we feel a throb of pity and sympathy; and when the dread summons comes to young people, in all the first flush of love and youth and beauty, our hearts are still more deeply stirred. And in middle life, also, when one is called away from the engrossing family life, with its strong and tender ties, and holy duties—when one has to leave all the great plans and purposes of life, to lay down, only half completed, our cherished work,

which *we* think no other hands but ours can finish : this is hard indeed. But when an old man like Sir Isaac Holden, full of years and honour, with his life's work all done, and nobly done, is suddenly called away, how can we mourn ?

The world has been the better, the ninety years that he lived in it, the better for his hard, conscientious toil, his splendid energy and good example, his inventive talents, which were all devoted to the good of the community. His nearest and dearest, however, must mourn his death, for when our beloved ones are taken, whether it be the young, in all their youth and strength, or the old, in their feebleness and weakness, they all alike seem to us to "die untimely," by reason of our great love.

To the world at large, Sir Isaac is very greatly to be envied. Without the long and weary pain and weakness, the utter exhaustion and restlessness which attend the dying, he, at the close of a long and well-spent life, at one bound has entered into rest and peace for ever.

Sir Isaac had been slightly ailing for a few months, but there was nothing to awaken serious alarm. He died on Friday morning, the 13th of August, 1897, at Oakworth House, near Keighley ; and the afternoon preceding his death, he had driven out in his carriage to Keighley, and then—true to his love for the free, open air—he had driven on to the Lancashire moors, a distance of four miles.

Sir Isaac's death has caused widespread sorrow in the Keighley district, for he was greatly respected and beloved. His son, Angus, succeeds to the baronetcy, and he represents the Buckrose division of Yorkshire, in the House of Commons.

Isaac Holden was born in 1807, at Hurlet, near Paisley. His father was a Cumberland miner ; so that he began life at the lowest rung of the ladder. At the age of ten, he was put to weaving in a cotton mill, and being a shrewd, clever boy, we can imagine he used his eyes and studied well the working of machinery. This boy of ten had, doubtless, all a boy's longing for a free, full out-of-door life, but year in, year out, he was chained to his wearisome grind, without hope of relief ; and we must bear in mind, that in those distant days, there were no holidays, as at the present time, and very long hours of labour.

To have a clear idea of what this boy battled through, we must remember he had no change. When winter snows lay all around,

and his hands and feet were numbed and aching from the cold, there was no bright fire by which he might stop and warm himself. And in summer-time, it was even worse; the heat, the close, dusty air, the whirr of machinery all around must have been trying indeed. And then in holiday time, when other boys were at football and cricket, or floating down stream through cool, green shadows, he had still to labour on.

The difference between Isaac Holden and most other boys was this, he did not turn into a mere animated machine, only anxious just to get through the day's toil, *somehow*, and to bear the day's discomfort as best he may. No, he brought thought and intelligence to bear upon his work, and thus the weary toil became a stepping stone to higher things.

Boys who have become famous in after life, whether in the commercial world, or in the great world of letters, have usually been thoughtful boys, and the first step in their upward path has generally been to find out their own ignorance.

To Isaac Holden this ignorance seemed like an iron bar, keeping him back from all advancement, an invincible barrier to success. There came a time, however, when a new thought came to him, like a wonderful inspiration, he would snatch a brief time after his hard day's toil, and try to learn. Behold, then, this boy, after many hours of hard work, turning to books with eagerness, and so wonderful was his thirst for knowledge, that after a time in addition to the ordinary routine of study, he began to read mathematics and physics.

At the age of fourteen, his father, who had probably noticed the boy's struggles with admiration and amazement, was enabled to let him have lessons in Latin and book-keeping. At the age of fifteen, young Holden was apprenticed to a shawl weaver in Paisley, but at the age of twenty he left that employment. First, because his father was dead, and he was anxious to help to support his family; and secondly, the work of the mill had become too heavy for his strength, tried as he had been at all points. He therefore became a school-master, first at Leeds, then successively at Huddersfield, Reading and Glasgow.

Imagine, then, Isaac Holden, at twenty, teaching little boys all day, studying in the evening, and saving, by frugality and self-denial enough money to help his family, left destitute by the death of his father.

England is right to be proud of her soldiers, and sailors, and statesmen, her men of letters and science, and the great merchant princes, who have built up her mighty commerce. But there is something grand and quite as worthy the admiration of Englishmen, in the attitude of young Holden, who, with all a young man's instincts, be very sure of that, and all a young man's desire for an open, free life, like so many of his fellows, should yet chain himself to his desk, year after year, to help his family, and endeavour to rise above his poor circumstances, and be a benefactor to his kind.

About twenty-three years of age, Isaac Holden became a book-keeper, and he kept bravely at his post for sixteen years. That is a large slice out of one's life. But he was full of courage and always patient. Such men ought to succeed; and as a matter of fact they generally do succeed. Men of purpose unite effort with perseverance, and infinite patience, and these qualities ensure success.

Isaac Holden was not a book-keeper only. By this time he had a little more leisure, and his thoughtful mind was full of machinery, carefully mastering every detail, and making himself acquainted with every new process.

In the end, he improved a wool combing machine, and thus eventually made his large fortune. He, and Mr. Lister (afterwards Lord Masham), became partners, and founded a great firm, known as the Bradford Industry, but establishing branches in Rheims and Rombaix, in France. He worked so hard at this, that in 1864 his health quite broke down.

Mr. Lister, the partner, was also a remarkable man, and a great inventor. He discovered and patented many inventions, and spent over a hundred thousand pounds experimenting with the machines for waste silk, before he had a single penny by way of profit.

The old partnership has, however, long ago come to an end, but to-day, the late Sir Isaac's firm "combs fleeces, which are counted by millions."

The deceased baronet sat as a Liberal for several years in parliament, and was first elected to the House of Commons for Knaresborough in 1865. His last constituency was the Keighley division, which he represented from 1885 to 1895.

The lesson of the old baronet's life is plain: "He who runs may read."

Damocles, or the Gates of Janus.

By THEODORA CORRIE.

Author of "IN SCORN OF CONSEQUENCE," "PETRONELLA DARCY,"
"ONLY THE AYAH," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XII. (*continued.*)

For a minute or two he did not answer her question, but hesitated for the second time this afternoon, more for her sake than for his own. The "instinct of the Universe" may be "social," but he was not particularly fond of acting in concert with his fellow creatures. In fact, to be perfectly honest, they often bored him. During his diplomatic career he gained too deep an insight into one type of human nature (not a good one). He knew too well what he might expect to find there. He had learnt that diplomacy is a bad school because it often leads to finesse and to covetousness. The Count was no embittered cynic; in his secret heart he still harboured some pity for the cripples in the race of life, but nowadays he had no wish to see or to know too much. He preferred to keep to every-day surfaces, and to spend the greater part of his time in his garden, and his evenings with a few old friends. He willingly gave advice about the pruning of roses, but where more mundane matters were concerned refused as a rule to be interested, maintaining that people who failed to manage their own affairs would never be grateful to you in the long run for adding your voice to the general confusion. Yet to-day with Henrietta's eyes fixed upon him he hesitated to give utterance to his usual opinions.

"I daresay," he said at last, "I daresay you remember the search of Ulysses when he first reached Hades?"

Henrietta laughed outright.

"Why yes, he sought for the part of a private gentleman, and he found it lying neglected in a corner, and took it to himself with joy: all he had gone through on earth having quite disenchanted him with ambition."

"Just so," said the Count. "That is my final rôle, at least I meant it to have been: but it seems liable to interruption. What

do you suppose Ulysses would have done when he came back from a constitutional on his own private Pegasus, if he had found the position and the corner both occupied one day by an interloper who set up a prior claim? Don't you think he would have had a tussle for possession?"

"No," said Henrietta, with conviction. "Some people might have struggled: not Ulysses. He would have had recourse to strategy. He would have had a deed of partnership drawn up and signed in no time: and if ever the other one remonstrated, even if he were the lawful owner, it would have been too late." She was still laughing at her own idea, when the Count flashed a glance at her so keenly penetrating, that she looked back at him in innocent amazement.

"You have given me an answer to a riddle that I could not solve," he said, "but I doubt some day if you will thank me."

"I don't understand," she said.

The expression of his own face softened and changed as he watched her.

"Some things are best not understood," he said genially. "I live very much alone and I have a habit of talking nonsense. Let me do a sensible thing for once, and bring you some more coffee. In a good hour here come Lady Evelyn and Mr. Godwin. Captain Stafford seems to be in need of allies, if I am not mistaken."

M. de Brie was right in his surmise: at the moment the loiterers made their appearance, Patrick was horrifying the rector by asserting for the third time at least, that no concert could hope to be a success, unless it were preceded by theatricals and followed by a bazaar, and a fortune-teller.

Mr. Proser, who looked upon all plays as the distinct works of the devil, who would have regarded the schoolhouse as a desecrated building, if ever a stage were erected in it; and who considered fortune-tellers to be the direct descendants of the Witch of Endor; had so far met all Patrick's suggestions with marked disfavour.

The rector was an elderly man, voluble, and pompous. This afternoon he held his tea-cup in one hand as he talked, waving it gently to and fro, much as he waved his Sunday sermon, returning again and again to the cake basket as if to a text.

Accounted the fool of his own family, five-and-forty years ago, time had failed to teach him wisdom. He had become in his old age a bore of the first water, and a sore trial to his curate, a clear-

headed, practical, middle-aged man, who often sighed self-reproachfully when he thought of those disciples of St. Paul, who "suffered fools gladly." Between the Lady of the Manor and the rector there existed a strong natural antagonism. The latter was never weary of censuring what he styled her decadent ideas, and innovations. He could never excuse her for making a stir about the insanitary condition of his own schoolhouse, or for her unfeminine curiosity as to the housing of many of the cottagers. More than this she had hopelessly contaminated his curate, who backed up her suggestions with ardent zeal. The two were firm allies, while tradition whispered that Mr. Proser had never forgiven Lady Evelyn for placing him in the position of a rejected suitor.

Upon the subject of the village concert and the use of the school-house, he yearly camped as upon a battle-ground. He was generally worsted in the end, but it took all Evelyn's forbearance, tact, and kindness of heart, to keep some one of the performers from being mortally offended before the final settlement of the programme. Upon this occasion having reduced Patrick to an unconvinced silence, the rector took up the thread of his discourse where he had been obliged to lay it down, and began once more to elaborate his plan of campaign. His very first words fell like a note of alarm on Evelyn's apprehensive ears.

"I am thinking," he said, "of asking my niece to come down for this concert. Her voice would very well take the place usually filled by Wallis, if his conduct again gives cause for censure. A man like that almost requires some public mark of reproof as well as parochial visitation. It was only last Saturday that I met him in no fit state to drive his cart: he ought never to have been made postman. It is a matter of wonder to me that the letters ever reach their destination, and really this year it seems altogether unseemly that the man should be allowed to appear on the same platform with yourself, not to speak of my own dignity in the matter."

Evelyn sighed. Wallis, the postman, was the most popular man in the village. He was of Irish extraction, and a born wit. More than this, he possessed a fine baritone voice, and a brain that might have led him to fame as an inventor, if it had not been for his one fatal habit of drinking. All that the rector said about him was true enough: yet Evelyn always hoped for Wallis, and more than once had helped to keep him straight.

"It is very sad," she said, "Wallis certainly sets a bad example, but he has had fewer relapses lately: and then one always thinks of his wife: she is the neatest, most respectable woman in the parish. Besides, Wallis always makes an effort to keep straight for the concert practices: that is why I have them on a Saturday. He thinks we can't get along without him, and if we help to destroy the remnants of his self respect by shutting him out, I fear he will spend his evenings at the Godwin Arms."

"The more shame to him if he does, my dear Lady Evelyn. I should be failing in my duty if I let that argument weigh with me: but I have not altogether made up my mind yet."

At this moment Evelyn showed herself a wise woman. She had learnt by long experience when to hold her tongue. Realising perfectly that her voice would weigh down the balance against the sinner: and counting upon the rector's short memory if it lacked the stimulus of opposition, she wisely proceeded to turn the course of his thoughts into a more agreeable channel.

"Your niece's help will be a very nice addition to the programme," she said, "but surely we can hardly ask her to sing the songs chosen for Wallis. What is her voice, Mr. Proser: a soprano?"

"Yes," he said, "of a very rare quality: she has a really magnificent voice. When I stayed with my sister a short time ago, I was astonished at the dear girl's progress. She fairly made the rooms ring, and my sister's house is a very large one. She used to sing those little pieces: 'Angels ever bright and fair,' and 'O had I Jubal's lyre.'"

"Little pieces!" Evelyn thought, "good heavens!" Aloud she only said, "Indeed!" while he went on blandly enough.

"Of course I shall have to find out if Mary can spare her, the dear girl is her mother's right hand. You are aware that my sister has a family of twelve, and the last babes are twins."

"Poor thing!" said Evelyn, involuntarily.

"Indeed," she rejoined, somewhat affronted, "I consider a large family more a cause for congratulation than for pity."

(He had never had any olive branches of his own, and his ideas on the management of children were of the vaguest.)

"Whether it is a matter of congratulation or the reverse depends upon one's income, doesn't it?" she asked, rather wickedly. "I might congratulate your sister"—Miss Proser had married a wealthy

brewer and had no cause to fear the advent of any number of olive branches—"but a woman like Mrs. Wallis, for instance, has hard work to make both ends meet with her ten children."

Mr. Proser shook his head. "The Bible says, my dear lady, 'Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them,' it doesn't specify circumstances or authorise us to do so."

"But the ancient quiver was only made to hold two, Mr. Proser."

He began to look a little put out. "You cannot prove that, I think."

"I have read it somewhere," she said.

"An unauthorised statement," he rejoined, waving his cup. "The Bible says, 'Happy is the man.'"

Lady Evelyn rose smiling. "Yes, Mr. Proser, but it never says 'Happy is the woman.' Come Ted, I think we must be going."

Having delivered this Parthian shot, she captured the reluctant Patrick, and said good-bye to her hostess. John followed her into the hall, and saw her off almost in silence. His mood seemed to be an infectious one. During the homeward drive Ted and Patrick did all the talking, and it was with a long drawn sigh of relief that she presently entered her own room, dismissed her maid, and sitting down by the open window gave herself up to reflection.

All this afternoon, at what cost no one else knew, Evelyn had resolutely forced her thoughts into the everyday channels of conversation. Any onlooker would have said that her spirits were unusually good, for the stimulus that obliges us to act under strong pressure generally gives point and emphasis to the most ordinary remarks. But now, safe at last from observation, she let slip the reins of self-control, and gave free vent to her emotion. With bowed head, and the unheeded tears streaming down her cheeks, all the past, sad, bitter and yet strangely sweet, rose before her. She had never been more conscious than at this minute of the fair childish presence of her dead twin sister, whose pictured face hung always on a slender chain at her throat. The night of that far away dance became more vividly present. It seemed but yesterday that Ethelyn, always frail and delicate, had been taken with a severe headache and unexpectedly debarred from her evening's amusement. Even now she could see the great bunch of roses lying on her sister's bed, the sweet flushed face resting against the pillows: could feel the clasp of the hands that held hers, and once more hear

the very tones of the young voice, touched with shy and tremulous happiness: "O Evelyn, do you see my flowers? John isn't able to come. His father is not very well. He has sent me a letter, and I can't altogether understand it. He says he is a poorer man than he thought he ever would be, and he hardly feels to have the right to see me any more. But all the same he can't keep away, and he is coming here to-morrow morning. I don't mind missing the ball now, or anything: and, oh, Evelyn, I want you to be as happy as I am, for General Thorne confessed to me to-day that he only comes here on your account. We always talk about you, when we are together, and I do like him so much."

Evelyn had not forgotten, would never forget, the events of that evening; her own words and actions seemed burned into her. She could hear herself answering her sister without any perceptible pause: "Darling, you must make haste to get well. I would sooner give you to John than to anyone else: and as for General Thorne, you are right. I have found out that he cares for me. I believe he is only waiting till to-night for his answer."

"What do you mean to say to him, dear Evelyn?"

"I mean to say yes."

"I am half in love with him myself, he is so handsome, and I always thought you ought to marry a V. C. or somebody grand like that. Come in again by and by, for I shan't be asleep: and give me a kiss before you go, Evelyn. I feel so happy. Life is very good."

How like a scene in a tragedy the rest of that evening had been. Evelyn said to herself that she had made a mistake, that she had lived in the fool's paradise of her own vanity, while all the time John's love had been given to her sister. Then there was the General. She remembered sitting out with him in the conservatory. How patient he had been with her, how gentle, when in answer to his suit had come her confession. In return for his love, she could but offer him esteem, and friendly liking: that, or nothing else. Unknown to herself her pride was up in arms. A secret voice was whispering to her that John, caring for Ethelyn, had done his best to trample on one heart on his way to another. If General Thorne had not told his love to-night, he might have received a different answer: as it was, he went away an openly accepted suitor.

And next her thoughts travelled on by one short hour to find her darling dead, with John's flowers in her hands, and the smile still on

her face. Sudden failure of the heart's action—so said the doctors : while for a time after the shock her own life was lived in a sick-room. From a short but severe illness, she had only recovered to hear of John in Italy, and of her future husband as the purchaser of the Chase. Too stunned at the time to pay much attention to anything, she had learnt to dwell tenderly since on the thought of all the love, the consideration lavished on her by her *fiancé*. Theirs had not been a long engagement, and during the few short months of her married life how she blamed herself for taking his all, and giving in return so little.

Then came the news of John's own wedding, followed soon by the announcement of his wife's death, by the tedious years of the war, and eventually by his return to Godwin's Rest.

All through the time that had followed his home-coming his avoidance of her, an avoidance so quiet that no one else would have noticed it, had been persistent. Pride and poverty are supposed to walk hand in hand : yet Evelyn, who knew him well, felt bitterly conscious of the course of action which he seemed to have marked out for himself. So far as her own behaviour was concerned the distance between them might easily have gone on widening had John been a richer man : but remembering his comparative poverty, Evelyn was too large minded, too free from morbid self introspection, and possibly too proud to harbour any form of hurt vanity, much less to have allowed it to take root in her heart. To look at her unruffled face, no one would have guessed that the estate which she now held, weighed ever upon her like an unspoken regret. She thought to herself now how hard, how brutal must have seemed the sole answer which his letter had received—the news of her own engagement, probably taken back to him that evening by Laura. After her illness she had meditated writing to him, but no one seemed to know his address, and then within a few months the news of his marriage embittered her a little. He appeared to have had no fidelity to her sister's memory, or else he could never have cared very deeply. But now it was easy to see how the match might have come about. Evelyn's heart made any and every excuse for him while she drew out the hidden miniature from her dress, and pressed her lips to it. All across the lost years her sister's last words lay like a blessing. "Life is very good. I am so happy, Evelyn."

In that hour, with tender thoughts and tears the past was

embalmed and buried away for ever : even as she had laid away the flowers and the note in her sister's coffin, as something too sacred for other eyes to look upon. That note hastily blotted and directed in John's indistinct handwriting, and smudged still farther to illegibility by the dew on the newly gathered roses, had kept its secret on the outside : while on the in, the first line, beginning "My dearest Cousin," had betrayed nothing to the young eyes lingering so lovingly on every letter.

The shadows were growing longer, the day was turning itself to rest, when Evelyn at last raised her head, walked to a mirror, and sitting down opposite it, considered her own reflection with an intentness betraying both pathos and humour. At seventeen she had been a lovely girl. She was still a very beautiful woman. The fair hair was as abundant as ever. The delicate colouring pure and unfaded. The tall figure, once almost too slight, was now rounded into those harmonious lines which seem but the natural outcome of a gracious personality. All about the face there lingered an inexplicable freshness which in some women still speaks of eternal youth even in old age ; that unconquerable spring of the heart refusing to lose its brightness, which no adverse fate or deep grief can ever quite kill or destroy.

Such a type of beauty was Evelyn Thorne's : and as she looked at herself, a little smile, half-tender, half-proud, grew upon her lips. Could John have seen her at this minute he would have realised that the past might be over and done with, but he would still have to sue for forgiveness before being told that he had done no wrong.

For she knew that he cared for her still, had always cared—her woman's intuition spoke here—or he would never have been cold, and bitter, and a little bit cruel sometimes : with that cruelty which every woman prefers to indifference, because despite itself, it betrays the living heart suffering behind it.

For a few minutes longer Evelyn sat still, idly twisting a long tress of hair round her fingers : but her next action was a characteristic one. Drawing her sketch from the portfolio in which she had placed it, with half a dozen swift strokes she put in a figure by the library window. If Patrick had been there he might for once have turned the tables on the subject of foregrounds. Her hand lingered over its task, and when she had finished she smiled at her own creation.

"If pride were stronger than love," she said, at last, "I might fear. But I am not a bit afraid of you any more John, and I have never been afraid for myself."

CHAPTER XIII.

ON the following Thursday, May started for the Chase. Henrietta watched her off, with a sinking heart, felt guiltily conscious of her mother's good spirits, and helped pet the monkey and the parrot with remorseful diligence.

Mrs. Godwin always needed waiting on, though generally speaking she preferred the attentions of a maid to those of her younger daughter. Sophie might have graduated as a nurse, her mistress never having recovered from "Italian hardships," or, rather, from the too short and blissful period of luxury spent at the Chase, in the extravagant days of her dead father-in-law. A thorough child of the south, she hated mental or bodily exertion, much as the veriest beggar on a sun-warmed pavement might have hated it. She had never climbed "Hill Difficulty," or willingly met or conquered anything unpleasant in her life. Minor worries she avoided, larger ones she skilfully shifted to more willing shoulders.

To-day, without in the least fathoming her mother's nature, intuition kept Henrietta in a state of mental disquiet, much as the electricity before a thunderstorm upsets the nerves of sensitive people.

Time passed heavily after May's departure, and the next morning only came to bring with it the realisation of Henrietta's worst fears. Paul appeared in the breakfast room to find Godwin there already, in excellent spirits, and impatient to see his sister-in-law.

He had dined at the Chase the night before, and after dinner Patrick Strafford, seizing an opportune moment, had declared his affection for May.

"A sensible, straightforward fellow," was John's verdict; "knows his own mind, too. He told me all about himself, Paul, and Evelyn confirmed it all afterwards while the two young people were at the piano together. I fancy your aunt will be very pleased. Not being behind the scenes, I was rather taken aback myself just at first; but Strafford has been improving his leave during the last six weeks at

Brussels, and I suppose May has confided in her mother. She may think herself fortunate from more than one point of view, particularly the monetary one. The young ones are growing up with a vengeance ; this sort of thing makes one feel old all of a sudden. Strafford is coming here after breakfast, and will drive May back. Evelyn wants us all to go over there this afternoon. I am glad it isn't Henrietta."

This last remark came as an afterthought. If the affair had concerned his other niece, John would not have taken Patrick's request so easily ; but May was one of those girls who always steer their own barks. Her uncle might be her guardian, but she had never asked for his advice, till hand in hand, with an accepted lover, and then not so much for advice as for approval. Such natures seldom, if ever, come to grief from a social point of view, and John was more amused than astonished at his niece's demure silence. He did not feel sufficiently fond of her, neither had there ever been enough affection between them for much spontaneous confidence. After breakfast he went upstairs to see his sister-in-law.

For an important interview the time chosen was not a propitious one. Despite Ted's good advice, the favourite parrot had been found dead in its cage this morning, and the monkey, having made its escape, had rubbed the blossoms from two lilies just coming into bloom. Reclining on a sofa in her dressing room, Mrs. Godwin was in an irritable mood, already inclined to take offence, when John made his appearance.

"Our young people are growing up," he began. "I would not have invaded your sanctum so early, Laura, but here have I been receiving an offer of marriage all by myself for May, last night. I was rather taken aback at first, but I expect you are better informed on the subject than I am."

For a moment, Mrs. Godwin forgot monkey, parrot, flowers, and everything else. "So soon!" she said. "You surprise me. May has said nothing to me, but of course that is quite accounted for. Any well brought up girl is naturally reticent about such matters, till an offer is an accomplished fact. But my own penetration is rarely at fault. How very much in love he must have been all this time."

"He seems so, indeed, Laura. He is very anxious to see you, to win your approval." John flattered himself that he was managing

splendidly, though May's silence, commended by her mother, struck him as a little odd.

"My approval!" she said. "I am delighted; though of course May might expect anything, I have always guessed that he cared for her, ever since old days when she was a tiny child, and so often had tea with him. He must have made the most of this visit too; still it seems wonderfully soon."

"The old days, Laura? Surely he has not been in this neighbourhood before; I can't ever remember meeting him."

She looked at him in bewilderment. "Why, John, what are you thinking about? You must remember that the children used constantly to have tea with him. Dear Ted! he is a most superior young fellow; I have always thought so, and now I am sure of it. It is just like him to be so anxious for my consent. He need have no fears on that score, though I can't help thinking that he treated my poor bird all wrong."

If she was satisfied, it was more than could be said for John at this minute.

"Dear who?" he said, sharply.

"Dear Ted," she said.

"I thought his name was Patrick?"

"Patrick? Patrick? My dear John, are you dreaming? Ted isn't Irish."

Upon his bewilderment dawned a sudden enlightenment. In former years he had been through half a dozen battles, and in many sharp encounters, but never before had he felt quite so taken aback as at this particular moment. Manlike, he looked appealingly at Henrietta, who had followed him, and she now came gallantly to the rescue. The secret being out, she felt at liberty to speak.

"Dear mamma," she said, "you are making a mistake; Uncle John is speaking of Captain Strafford. He has cared for May ever since he met her two months ago."

Mrs. Godwin rose from her seat. "Is this the truth?" she asked, her voice shook a little.

"Quite the truth, mamma," said Henrietta, inwardly quaking.

"May has said nothing to me on the subject, but you seem very well informed," said her mother, still with the same ominous tremble in her voice. "How long have you been arranging all this amongst you?"

"It has arranged itself, my dear Laura," said Godwin. He had recovered his own self-possession by this time, and now returned Henrietta's assistance with interest.

"I don't want nonsense, but facts," said she, regarding the two guilty news-bearers with a face like a judge.

"I didn't mean to be nonsensical," said Godwin, meekly. He knew that circumstances alter cases, and could see that May's behaviour merited some censure. He was now divided between a desire to laugh, and a fear of mortally offending his sister-in-law's wounded susceptibilities.

"It seems to me," he went on, "that the matter really has arranged itself, modern fashion, my dear Laura. So far as I can tell, one may be thankful if every other marriage had a chance of turning out half as happily. Evelyn knows all about young Strafford. He is a capital fellow, she says, and very well off too, and we could all see what he wanted when he was over here the other day. It struck me even then, that it was not the view he had come for." This speech, considered a well-timed one, delivered on purpose to give Mrs. Godwin opportunity to collect her thoughts, produced exactly the opposite effect to the one intended.

She could now hardly find open fault with May's silence, having just commended it, on the supposition that the suitor in question was Ted Lisle. But this mental bridle, coupled with the remark about the sketching party, did but add fuel to the fire of her exasperated feelings. Her lips tightened to a thin line, as she said: "If you suppose that I shall countenance this Captain Strafford's proposal, for one moment, you are very much mistaken, John."

"But, my dear Laura, how are you going to get out of it? There is no valid reason to give, Strafford is an excellent *parti* in every way."

"There are fifty reasons if I chose to give them, but one is enough. I won't hear of an engagement: neither will May, I am sure."

"On the contrary, I have very good reason to believe that May's heart has already gone out of her own keeping," said John, gently.

At this point the last remnant of his sister-in-law's temper went to the winds. "If this man has drawn May into an engagement without ever coming to me, I will never speak to him again," she said.

"No, no!" said John, "you mustn't think that the matter stands

like that for a moment. The young man very properly came to me last night, for the simple reason that you weren't there. It is not eleven o'clock yet, and I am expecting him over here every minute with May : they are both most anxious for your approval."

"They will never have it, John. He had no right to come here at all. It will be of no use. It is a regular conspiracy. You are all against me, I can see that." And her lace handkerchief went up to her eyes.

Godwin was only human, and that handkerchief had on his nerves the same effect as the proverbial red rag produces on a bull. By the wearisome experience of years he knew too well what it betokened.

"And meanwhile," he asked, "what am I to say to Strafford? He is too much in earnest to be put off without a proper explanation."

"Say anything you like, only send him away. I won't see him, my nerves are shattered for to-day."

"I am afraid he won't go for a message, Laura. I am sorry for your nerves, but, my dear, do try to be reasonable." He might have known this last request to be a useless one.

"I think you have all taken leave of your senses," she said. "I have excellent reasons for my refusal. I had meant something very different for May : altogether different. He may be a mere adventurer. Oh, yes, I know Evelyn thinks well of him, but that is no advantage in my opinion."

"We will leave Evelyn out of the question if you please, Laura."

"I can't believe that May wishes it," she went on. "I thought it was all going to be so different. I have always intended Ted for May : they are just cut out for each other."

"Apparently, Ted doesn't think so," said Godwin. "You forget : we don't arrange marriages Italian fashion in England. Now, my dear," he spoke coaxingly, as one might to a spoilt child, "do try to look at this in a sensible light and from the young peoples' point of view."

"Never !" she said, now completely exasperated. "It is always the most trusting people who are the most deceived. If May chooses to encourage this young man, I will have nothing to do with him."

"It can scarcely end so, Laura, and if he is to have his congé, I for one, decline to give it. I must leave that to you. I have just

heard the carriage drive up. May will be here in a minute. I shouldn't wonder if she brought him to see you at once."

Mrs. Godwin began to be frightened now as well as angry. Large events don't occur every day, and over small ones she had for so long reigned supreme that she had acquired a false opinion of her own powers. If there was something of the bully in her disposition, there was still more of the coward.

"What do you wish me to do?" she asked, sullenly.

"I want to prevent you making a fool of yourself," Godwin thought. Aloud he said: "Well, let me take a civil message to Strafford while you talk to May. I can easily say that before giving him any definite answer you would like to see her. It is only natural that her happiness should be your first consideration."

"If I considered for a hundred years, I shouldn't change my mind," was the peevish answer. "However, I suppose you must say something."

"Please go, Uncle John," whispered Henrietta. "Leave me with mamma. I hope presently that she may feel better."

But Mrs. Godwin's quick ears caught the murmured sentences.

"How is there any chance of my feeling better?" she said. "I shall probably have one of my attacks. I am utterly over-wrought, and disappointed in all of you. There is nothing left: nothing!" she ended, with a vague desolation in her voice. "No, John you need not stay: my head is racking but it doesn't matter. Give me my salts, Henrietta: and if May really has arrived, find her, and bring her up to me at once."

Thus summarily dismissed the two messengers departed. As the baid door shut behind him, Godwin turned to his niece with a long-drawn breath of relief:

"So, my little conspirator, you knew all about it?"

"I promised," she said, distressfully, "at least May meant it all as a pleasant surprise, but I was afraid mamma would be upset."

"There's no doubt about that," he said, ruefully. "I suppose I must tell Strafford that your mother will write, that she isn't well enough to see him this morning. What are you thinking about child?"

"I am thinking that mamma doesn't change her mind easily Uncle John."

He frowned. He knew that Mrs. Godwin, like some other weak

people, could be very obstinate when her feelings were once ruffled. "It's altogether absurd," he said. "Has your mother been seriously contemplating the arrangement of a betrothal between Ted and May for any length of time?"

Henrietta blushed. "Ever since last year, I believe. She has often spoken of it to me, as if it were an understood thing in her own mind. Marriages are often arranged in Italy aren't they?"

"Yes, but Italian ways are not English ones, Hetty. I trust she has said nothing to anyone else."

"Oh, no, only to me. I remember last year that mamma said May must be educated for her position when there was some talk of her leaving school."

"What a little deponent of secrets you seem to be."

She slipped her hand into his, saying with a sudden unexpected tremor in her voice, "I hate secrets. But I oughtn't to stay here talking. I must find May. Nothing that I can do will be of any use, but if anyone can persuade mamma to be happy about this affair it will be May herself."

She spoke without any consciousness of the pathos of her words, but her uncle pressed the little hand that he still held.

"You needn't go downstairs," he said. "Here comes the culprit to answer for herself."

But if May were indeed a culprit it would have been hard to find anywhere a more innocent looking person. She had run upstairs while the two were talking, and now appeared in the passage, laden with flowers, with an emerald ring on her finger, and a general air of supreme well-being in her whole manner. Bestowing on her uncle a cheerful good-morning salute, and desiring him to go down to Captain Strafford, whom she had left in the library, she next kissed her sister affectionately, and after a few explanatory words and smiles prepared to go on to her mother's room. Henrietta, not much reassured by the young lady's manner, in vain begged her to be careful.

"I can't see why it should be such a shock to mamma," she said. "People get engaged every day. It is a most ordinary occurrence. I am eighteen, and she must have seen Patrick's intentions when he came over here only the other afternoon. Why did she give me leave to stay at the Chase, if she meant nothing to come of it? This question met with no answer. Henrietta for some unexplained

reason could not bring herself to mention her mother's plans. Worried and perplexed she followed May, who entered the dressing-room with a cheerful :

"Well, mamma, I am sorry that you have a little headache. I am back again you see, and I have some good news for you."

Mrs. Godwin turned her face away impatiently, while May stooped and kissed the small portion of cheek left visible.

"Patrick and I are engaged," she said, as if this were the happiest announcement possible. "It was so good of you to let me stay at the Chase, mamma."

This was too much! Mrs. Godwin raised herself. "I should never have let you go, if I had guessed that there was any chance of such an occurrence, May. Evelyn has deliberately led me astray."

"Oh! but that is nonsense," May said. "Cousin Evelyn is quite incapable of deceit; she is about the most straightforward person imaginable."

"You may think so, though it seems to me that she has been anything but straightforward in this matter, but that is beside the mark. May, you don't really care for this man?"

The touch of real feeling in this question moved Henrietta, but May took the appeal quite lightly. "Why, I thought you would be so pleased," she said. "Uncle John is delighted. Besides, what more could I reasonably expect? Bachelors don't flourish on a chalk soil, and Patrick is what everyone would call an excellent *parti*."

"What more?" asked her mother, for once forgetting her pillows. "Twenty-thousand times more! You could have been prospective mistress of the Grange; but you have thrown your chances away, hopelessly."

May's face grew grave at this suggestion. "My dear mamma, that would have been all very delightful, but about as possible as that I should climb to the moon. Ted doesn't care for me in the least, nor I for him; indeed, now I come to think of it, I believe that he rather dislikes me. I do hope that you have never suggested such an arrangement to Cousin Evelyn. She would think us all so absolutely silly, not to say vulgar."

Mrs. Godwin sunk back on her pillows, saying in an affronted voice, "I had a right to expect a good deal for you. The idea is a very natural one."

"I don't see that at all," said May. "Anyway, it is quite impossible now, for I have given myself to someone else, and I want you to be kind and congratulate me. I am sure you will like Patrick very much when you once get to know him better. We are keeping him waiting all this time. And you haven't even looked at my ring. I do love emeralds, and Patrick says that green is his favourite colour. It always suits me so well, that I think I will have one or two green dresses in my trousseau. We must go to town together next week, mamma. You know that you love choosing pretty things."

"Go to town, May, in my state of health? Impossible! Besides you may talk of an engagement, but I shall not sanction it for a moment."

"Oh, I see," said May, "that accounts for Uncle John's grave face. I couldn't think what was the matter with him, as Patrick says he is generally so genial."

"I don't wonder that he looked uncomfortable," said her mother. "May darling, you will give up this man to please me, won't you? You know that you have always been my favourite child." She scarcely noticed her younger daughter sitting in the shadow of the curtain, and even had she been more conscious of her presence, would probably have made just the same remark without any realisation of its significance.

May's next speech came with a dash of astonishment in it. "Give up Patrick, mamma? Give him up? I really can't."

"But you have seen so little of him, you cannot care much for him, May dearest."

"But I have seen a great deal of him. The whole time that I was with the Straffords in the Black Forest, we used to go everywhere together," said May, recklessly. "And as for not caring for him, I care enough to have promised to marry him next month, if you approve. And Patrick says that will just give us time for a short tour in Ireland, before he rejoins his battery. He has some relations in Sligo, charming people, but I can't say that I much look forward to staying with them. They were boycotted last year, and Patrick says that he had to sit on the floor to eat his meals for fear of being shot at. The people about were so disaffected; but I believe they are quieter now."

Temporarily borne down by this stream of eloquence, Mrs. Godwin

only shuddered, while May went on : " We shall sail for Gibraltar after that, I suppose ; but Patrick will be retiring before long. His uncle is in very failing health, and now that his wife is dead, he wants Patrick's mother to keep house for him. She is going to Lancaster Gate this week. He allows Patrick fifteen thousand a year, and will leave him as much more ultimately, and he wishes him to live in London for part of the year. He has no children, and he is over ninety, and Patrick is very fond of the old man." She came to a pause here from sheer lack of breath, while her mother said, coldly :

" That will do, May, you can leave me alone for the present."

Just for one moment May hesitated, then rose from her seat at the end of the sofa, took Henrietta by the arm, led her to the door, opened it, and gently putting her into the passage, said, " Leave mamma to me, dear, and go downstairs. Patrick and Uncle John will have had enough of each other by this time. Don't worry about mamma, I will make her quite happy in a few minutes, if you will leave us alone together. I can manage her." Then, seeing Henrietta look dubious over the word "manage," May gave her a gentle push, and went back into the room, shutting the door.

Mrs. Godwin lay still on the sofa ; her eyes were closed, and her fingers played with the fringe of her shawl.

" What have you come back for, May, when I told you to go ? "

May paid no heed to this speech, but sat down and regarded her mother critically—much as a mad doctor might regard a refractory patient, while considering the best means of coercion—then she said, with apparent irrelevance : " Mamma, haven't you found out yet, that Ted is desperately in love with Henrietta ? He would marry her to-morrow, if he could."

The effect of this little speech upon Mrs. Godwin was electrical. Her colour came and went ; she sat up, and abandoning all her manner of cold displeasure, gazed at her daughter in open-eyed bewilderment. " I daresay, dear mamma, that you have thought me obstinate," May went on, " but Henrietta is very sensitive—she is worth twenty of me—and if you keep saying that you are disappointed, and that you want me to marry Ted, Hetty will certainly take a dislike to him."

" Are you sure about Ted ? " asked Mrs. Godwin, still startled beyond measure at May's assertion.

"Quite positive, mamma; there is no mistaking his intentions. It is pretty to see the way he watches her when he thinks that she won't notice him; it is unmistakable. Patrick was referring to it only this morning, when we were sitting in the garden, before breakfast. He guessed what Ted wanted, the day of the sketching party, and if he succeeds he will be very fortunate; we both think so. The Godwins are better born than the Harebrooks, if it comes to that; and Henrietta might marry anyone who is anybody," May ended.

Mrs. Godwin sat silent now, hesitating what to say next. During the last three minutes the kaleidoscope, termed her brain, had received a tremendous shake. All her old ideas were slipping from their former pattern, and could not yet take fresh shape before her mental vision with any clear distinctness. At the same time an unpleasant conviction was stealing over her, that, so far as May was concerned, argument would be useless. The girl did not look in the least put out; on the contrary, she was as fresh, as cool, and smilingly placid as at the moment of her first entrance; but there was no sign of submission in her manner, and seeing her own opportunity in her mother's present state of uncertainty, she was quick to seize upon it.

"You think, mamma, that I am not able to sympathize with you," she went on, in the same even voice, "but I can; and if you like I will put myself in your place. We will suppose, by way of argument, that I married Ted. You wouldn't see much of me while Aunt Catherine lives, for I know you hate being under the same roof with her. In any case, I believe you would like me to live chiefly in the country, to settle in this neighbourhood, but I could never do that, I should be bored to death here, and so would Patrick too."

There was really something amusing in the cool way in which May took it for granted all along that she was going to marry Patrick—"I could quite understand your disappointment, though, about Ted, if there were not such a simple way out of the difficulty, mamma."

"I really can hardly follow you," said her mother, in a voice in which wounded feeling, curiosity, and some confusion seemed to struggle together, "but I am very clearly aware of one thing, May, you are not treating me with proper respect."

"I didn't mean to be disrespectful, mamma. I was merely making a statement. You naturally wish me and Hetty to marry

well, if only to save us from the dull life that you have had to put up with yourself for so long. How you stand living here so quietly, I can't make out. I am sure you must often long to be back at the Chase, and I daresay you have often thought what you would like to do, when the Godwin money comes back to Uncle John, and he is a rich man again. I hope poor Aunt Catherine may live for many years to come, but, as everyone says, she looks dying."

"Whatever happens I shall never wish to go back to the Chase again," said Mrs. Godwin, in a contemptuous voice. "A nasty, draughty, modern house. Your grandfather built it, and he was his own architect. It's just a big square box of a place tacked on to the stables, and everything else sacrificed to them." (She was right there) "Godwin's Rest is the best built house in the country, the Grange excepted. If the place were properly kept up, I should never wish for anything better. Considering what John is heir to, he could easily raise a little money, but he will never listen to reason. I have done my best to maintain appearances, and if it were not for me, he would be nowhere. It is not by my order that half the rooms here are shut up, and that the greenhouses are almost empty. It's no use my saying anything. I hope at some future time to see the old place restored to what it used to be."

"Yes," said May, "I understand. But, don't you see, mamma, that if Henrietta accepts Ted, her future home will be at the Grange, and she will be mistress there some day, for Cousin Sol is a confirmed wanderer, and if ever Uncle John marries again"—Mrs. Godwin made a movement of anger here, but May went on calmly, repeating her words, oblivious of the other's indignant expression—"if Uncle John marries again, you will have to turn out. Under such circumstances a mother's natural place is with one of her children. Certainly Godwin's Rest would throw the Chase into the shade if properly kept up, but I daresay it has never occurred to you on the other hand that the Grange, if one could have one's choice, is the most desirable house of the three? I can see it all," she was not looking at her mother now, but meditatively turning the emerald hoop round and round upon her finger—"I can draw an imaginary sketch of the future, mamma, which will I think develope some day into a very pleasant picture. This place would be all very well if Uncle John could keep it up properly, and at the same time remain a widower, but you haven't the strength or the energy to entertain as

you used to, even if the means were at your disposal. You fancy that you would like to keep open house again, but without any daughters I am certain the fatigue would more than make up for the pleasure of it all. I prophecy that at some future day I shall see you at the Grange, enjoying the comfort of a big establishment without any of the worries. Henrietta is devoted to a country life, and would do anything to please you, and Ted will never be able to spend much of his time in London. All the same, I don't want to be unkind or to make you unhappy, dear mamma, only we must consider Henrietta; I suppose I was born selfish, but really everything is turning out for the best. You don't feel angry with me any more, do you, now that you know about Ted?"

At the present moment Mrs. Godwin hardly knew what she did feel. For the first time it began to dawn upon her that she might live more happily with Henrietta than with this determined daughter. The girl possessed her father's volatile disposition, and a desire to please, which tintured the selfishness inherited from her mother and prevented the latter quality from showing itself too obtrusively to outsiders. But on the other hand she had more tact and more daring than Mrs. Godwin, and her will was stronger. It is much easier to drive over everything by broad day-light on a powerful engine than to tunnel mines underground all one's life. The pits left behind are apt to fall in unexpectedly and to render retreat impossible. At the present moment Mrs. Godwin felt very like a general who has carefully dug a mine, only to find that the enemy has broken into it beforehand, and fired a charge of dynamite at an unexpected place. It upset the whole plan of campaign at the outset to have Ted desperately in love with Henrietta: next the suggestion that John might marry again was a most alarming one: though the possible migration to the Grange cleared a very fair avenue in the midst of this thicket of newly sprung possibilities. The unpleasant discovery that her own guns were spiked and her forces routed, obliged her to call a truce with the largest portion of dignity that could be realised at such short notice. She had listened to May's assertions with a growing sense of uneasiness, though the girl's fair, composed face looked as innocent as a sheet of blank paper.

"I think, May," she said at last, "that your behaviour will not bear much discussion: indeed, my dear, I hardly know what to say to you, when you talk so wildly. Of course I must consider

Henrietta, and if Ted really cares for her it alters everything. I can quite understand your wish to spare her sensitiveness, but all the same, May, you shock me very much when you let your fancies run away into these schemes for the future. Whatever happens you can always remember that I endeavoured to do my best for you. In my young days matters were settled very differently, but I suppose we old people must accustom ourselves to changes, and if your heart is really set on this man, and Uncle John vouches for his respectability—" here she sighed, but the sigh was choked at its birth by a fervent embrace from May.

"Now, mamma, I won't have you look so depressed. It is high time to find cause for congratulating me. The Straffords are very well off, and Patrick is heir to a baronetcy, his old uncle used to be a brewer and an M.P. too. Nothing pays like beer you know. Of course I will never let Patrick or cousin Evelyn find out your plans about Ted. They think Henrietta perfection : I can see that."

"And I can see a spoilt child who means to have her own way," said Mrs. Gordon, pinching May's cheek with a faint attempt at playfulness.

The little speech about Evelyn and Patrick had found its mark. No other form of argument could have taken more effect. Mrs. Godwin had a horror of ridicule : she lived on a pinnacle in her own estimation, and fondly imagined that most other people saw her on one too. But, as we have said once before, in the depths of her heart lay an unacknowledged conviction that Evelyn was quite capable of laughing at her. Her behaviour to the popular mistress of the Manor was therefore regulated by a tinge of fear, fear which prevented dislike from bursting into open hostility. The bare possibility that her own plans or arrangements could furnish Evelyn with food for ridicule made her shudder.

Perhaps May knew her mother's weak points : at any rate, Henrietta came back, half-an-hour later, to find the two ladies sitting side by side with a French fashion book open between them, while the trousseau was already being discussed with apparent interest.

May had scored a victory, and flattered herself on her own admirable tactics, but at the same time she had lost a place in her mother's affection which could never be regained. The idea that her own daughter could call her behaviour silly, gave a violent shock to Mrs. Godwin's *amour propre*. Some natures do not easily forget or for-

give, and May's little speech remained ineffaceably branded on her memory. Doubtless in the coming years May would be missed; her superior ways might be compared with Henrietta's, to the latter's disadvantage—there would be a secret fretting for the child who had always been the favourite—but ever linked with this longing would come a rankling sense of mortification and of disappointment; disappointment that might find relief in various sharp speeches which would glide off May's self-complacency as harmlessly as the water-drops shaken from the back of a dab-chick. During the next few days the girl appeared supremely happy. Of course it was unfortunate that such a fuss had been made, and that even her uncle's manner betrayed, for a time, a touch of severity; unlucky, too, that Mrs. Godwin could scarcely be brought to speak to Patrick Strafford without an intensified langour of condescension. Everyone had been very selfish, she reflected, and there the matter soon ended, so far as her own conscience was concerned; but Henrietta saw deeper than the surface, and her own tenderness increased, striving as best it might to fill the gap left by May's behaviour. Behind the scenes the girl felt fully and wearifully conscious of a constant state of friction between her mother and sister. While smilingly lamenting the prospective loss of her daughter to that portion of the outside world which took the shape of callers, Mrs. Godwin already began to feel that to get the wedding over would be an unmitigated relief.

Conscious of some new discomfort caused by May's presence, she had begun to dread those half-playful, half-ironical remarks which always found out some weak spot and lacerated it. School life had not improved the girl's manners.

Unfortunately the old market of experience admits no messengers. Everyone must make their own purchases, and in this instance education had been dearly bought. There was no harm in May, beyond an inrooted lightness, which would always stop safely at the surface of things, and a conviction equally inrooted, though undefined, that it is more pleasant in this life to receive than to give.

Henrietta, who had looked forward to unlimited pleasant companionship during the next few months, could not but feel that the airy castle of expectation lay shattered at the outset. The eager tenderness in her manner during the next few weeks, showed that she could not do enough for the sister so soon to be taken away from

her; while May's behaviour in return was generally sufficiently affectionate.

Very kind letters had been received from old Sir Patrick, and from Captain Strafford's mother, together with an invitation to spend a week in Lancaster Gate, a proposal which May gladly accepted. It would be so convenient for shopping, and if the old uncle wished to inspect her, she had no objection, and apparently no fear as to the result of his scrutiny. In her future mother-in-law, she felt sure of an ally beforehand, and the event justified her anticipations.

Sir Patrick fell an easy prey to the girl's merry talk, and fresh youthfulness. She had plenty of style too, he decided, and knew how to dress; and as for having no fortune, why that didn't matter a bit, Patrick would have enough for both of them. It had been the desire of his heart for some years now that his nephew should marry, and as May came up to town bent on making herself charming, she won golden opinions, and her week's stay lengthened into a fortnight. The wedding was definitely fixed for the middle of June, and she returned home laden with pretty things, and with her head in a whirl of pleasure.

In the meantime Mrs. Godwin's manner to Henrietta showed a decided increase of interest and affection. Some people value none of their possessions, nay, are careless of them, till the outside world has either nodded or shaken its head. The seal of approval once set, their own estimation goes up fifty per cent., and in this particular instance, May's startling assertion had at last opened Mrs. Godwin's eyes to a very palpable truth. "Facts are stubborn things!" During the next few weeks, for one reason or another, Ted constantly appeared at Godwin's Rest. As Jeremiah once remarked confidentially to Sophie, he should think his lordship's horse must begin to know its way over by this time.

(To be continued.)

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"Forbidden."

By HELEN F. HETHERINGTON,

Part Author of "PAUL NUGENT, MATERIALIST," "NO COMPROMISE,"
"LED ON," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE LAW ALLOWS IT!

If there had been more light Beatrice would have seen that Geoffrey Talbot, though dressed in the latest fashion, according to the cut of his frock coat, and with a flower in his button-hole, looked very unlike his usual self. His face was white, his lips trembled, and he seemed to be suffering from such an inward perturbation of feeling that he could scarcely act with any sort of conventionality. He never explained that having told Simmons that he knew Lady Falconer was "at home," he passed in so quickly that he gave him no time to stop him, and so ran upstairs, without being announced. Also that he had had the grace to knock, but receiving no answer had ventured to come in. He was so full of all that he had just heard and of his own object in coming, that he stood there without apology or excuse, with just control enough over himself to prevent him from catching hold of one of those little hands lying idly in her lap, and covering it with kisses.

She wondered why he did not speak or shake hands, and asked him to light the standard lamp, as they were not going to hold a dark séance. He pulled a silver match-box out of his pocket, and lighted it, as he had often done before, but he only turned it up now to give a very subdued radiance, which he felt to be appropriate for the occasion.

"Won't you sit down?"

He brought a low chair close beside the sofa, as if she were deaf

and would not be able to hear him. As he sat down, his foot touched the copy of "Audacity" which was lying on the floor, and with sudden revival of energy, he gave it a savage kick which sent it flying across the room.

Beatrice was beyond feeling surprise at the moment. She could scarcely collect her thoughts sufficiently to make the simplest attempt at ordinary conversation, and she sat there, quite still, waiting for him to say why he had come, or where he was going, with no definite interest in either. She was not even conscious that his eyes were devouring her face with growing excitement, as he marked the signs of suffering upon it. There were his violets in her dress, showing that his offering had been kindly received, and they seemed to give him the one touch of encouragement that he needed. With the remembrance of her wrongs nearly maddening his brain—he broke out abruptly, "I know all about it," and then waited breathlessly to see the effect of his words. The light of the lamp fell softly on her delicate face, disclosing the dark shadows under her eyes, the melancholy droop in her gentle mouth, bringing out the fairness of her beautifully rounded throat against the violet velvet of her dress. His heart went out towards her on a wave of pity and admiration.

"They all know it," she answered with intense bitterness. "I'm told that I am the laughing-stock of London."

"The laughing-stock—God forbid," he exclaimed fervently, and then he leant forward, and looked straight into her downcast face with a frank appeal in his eyes.

"Don't pity me!" she said hurriedly, "I can't bear it—indeed I can't."

"I don't want to have to pity you." Could he dare to go on? Could he risk everything and tell her what was seething in his brain? He might offend her so mortally that she would never let him come near her again; but on the other hand, his passionate devotion might have the power to touch her. He looked round the room desperately. In the dim light, and the deep silence there was something that drew him irresistibly on. Such a golden opportunity would never come to him again. He would be an absolute fool not to use it. He took his courage in both hands, as the French say, and asked hoarsely, "May I be very bold?"

"Just as you like," she answered in a level tone of perfect indifference. "I am as callous as a stone."

Scarcely an encouraging response, but having begun he had to go on, and the strength of his feeling carried him through. "You've had enough, God knows, to make you so," he said earnestly, "but I've come to ask you to put a stop to it."

"I should rather like to do it, if I could," she said dryly, her eyes still looking at the fire or the floor, as if she had not the energy to raise them.

"There is only one way—give him up—cast him off—and be free!" breathlessly.

"Impossible!"

"As easy as possible, on the contrary. Think what it would be to be free! Oh, Lady Falconer," his voice deepening as his heart throbbed fast, "you can't guess how I've *longed* for your freedom!"

"Not quite as much as I," she said in a low voice, with a sudden catch in her breath.

"More—ten thousand times more," he insisted vehemently. "I've thought of you, dreamt of you, night after night—as free, free to be loved as I've loved you always—free to be won as I hope to win you, as soon as that cursed ring is off your finger."

She raised her eyes and looked him full in the face, meeting his passionate glance with one of intense reproach. "*This* from you!"

He bent over her, eager, passionate, devoted.

"Couldn't you love me if you were free?" he asked with his most winning smile.

"It is scarcely like a gentleman to insult me when I am down—down as low as I can go," she said slowly, but with a sudden flash in her eyes.

"Insult you—good God!—nothing was further from my thoughts," his cheeks whitening as he winced. "I only said when you were free—I—"

"I never shall be free—till I am dead," she interrupted him quickly.

"Never?" he echoed drearily, as the light went out of his face—"you won't take your chance, and get rid of him—when you can?"

"When I can't," she corrected.

"But the law allows it," he said eagerly. "And if there ever *was* a case—"

"The Church forbids it."

"The Church?" he repeated as if he hardly understood what she

meant. "The Church made this marriage which has spoilt your life. Let her undo it as fast as she can. There is no time to be lost. It is wearing you out. Every time I see you I find a difference. It will kill you if it goes on," he said hotly.

"I wish it would—and be quick about it too," she rejoined, meaning it with all her heart.

There she sat in all the pride of her youth and her wonderful beauty—a young girl—more beautiful as he thought than any other—and yet the only thing left her for a wish—was death—to die like the old and worn out—to die like the starved or the stricken—to die like a miserable failure, for whom life has neither promise nor hope. The thought drove him wild.

"You will die for the sake of an idea—when you might be free as the wind in a few months. Think of it," he implored. "I'm not half good enough for you, of course—but at least I shall know how to love you, and take care of you—and keep straight for your sake, and you shall have your own way from morning till night."

"I don't doubt it," and her face softened as she saw his burning eagerness, and knew that she must chill it. "You would be kindness and devotion itself—but don't you think you had better choose another topic? You forget whose house you are in, and that you are speaking to the owner's wife."

He started to his feet, flushing hotly. "Would to God he were dead!" he cried fiercely, feeling ready and eager to carry his wish into execution at the moment.

She got up from the sofa, and leant wearily against the mantleshelf. "I cannot listen to you any longer."

There was nothing for it but to go, and go he must, but how could he go—when he would have to carry with him this heavy sense of loss wherever he went? There had been no exaggeration in his words. Beatrice had been the object of his fairest hopes ever since their last meeting at Ethelred Hall. When the reports grew worse and worse as to her husband's misdoings, he consoled himself with the thought that the Earl was making it easier for his wife to get rid of him. He was of an ambitious turn of mind, though to most of his friends he seemed to be nothing better than a social butterfly, and he meant to be an Ambassador long before old age robbed him of the power of enjoyment. And what a wife for an Ambassador Lady Falconer would make, with her air of distinction

and her unrivalled beauty. He had revelled in this thought with a constancy that surprised himself, and other women lost their power of fascinating him, because he was always comparing them to their disadvantage with the ideal close hidden in his heart. And now he could think of this no more! It was all over—there was a blankness in the future which bewildered him, and which seemed to be waiting for him as soon as that door would close behind him.

He looked at her hesitatingly—her head fell down upon her hands as they rested on the mantle-shelf in an attitude of utter dejection. Then for the first time he realised the extent of his own cruelty. He had been talking to a prisoner condemned to penal servitude for life, of the inexpressible delights of freedom—conjuring him to go out and enjoy them to the full, when he knew that the door was locked, and the window barred. And his words must have seemed like the most heartless mockery! She was tied to this brute by a chain which she considered unbreakable, and he had urged her to set herself free! Could anything have seemed more wantonly cruel? The grace of her attitude was perfect, but he longed to see it altered. The small dark head with its rich coils of hair still rested on her hands, and she neither moved nor spoke. Every insignificant sound in the room, of ticking clock or falling coal, became an aggressive noise. He longed to throw his arms round her, and draw her close to his breast; and the longing grew almost irresistible in the pregnant silence. Surely there must be some answer to his love in the secret corners of her heart. It could not be absolutely thrown away!

“Beatrice!” he uttered her name as softly as he could—and then drew a deep breath.

The door opened, a voice said respectfully, “I beg your pardon, my lady—I thought you were alone.”

A child dressed in velvet and lace ran into the room with unsteady steps, and eager outstretched arms, “Mummy! Mummy!” he cried in his fresh young voice, and caught hold of his mother’s dress with his chubby hands.

Beatrice started—it was as if all her softer instincts had been brought into new life by her child’s electric touch. She raised her head quickly, and kneeling down by the child on the rug, clasped her hands fondly round his small form, kissing him passionately; and as the light of her great love broke over her face, and shone

out of her eyes—Geoffrey stepped back involuntarily. There seemed to be no longer any place in that room for him.

A minute later he was outside on the damp pavement, with the chill November fog shrouding the street, and blurring its familiar outlines into a strange unlikeness of their usual shape—with a still denser fog in his brain, leaving all that had happened in the last quarter of an hour an indistinct memory of trouble.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

CLUB CHATTER.

CAPTAIN PEMBERTON was a delight to his brother officers, because, for two years or more, he only applied for most sparing allowance of leave. Month after month, he stayed up at Aldershot, seeming to take a strange pleasure in the dull routine of "duty" which absolutely amazed them. The others fled up to London on every possible pretext, inventing moribund relations or newly engaged sisters, in order to obtain leave for fictitious funerals or weddings. They talked of Aldershot in the winter as next-of-kin to Siberia, in summer as an Anglican Sahara—distinguishing features—dust and thirst. Pemberton was a puzzle to them, for no one had a key to his conduct. They could not guess that this comrade of theirs, who was as far removed as possible from being a pious bore or a morose misanthrope—a man who made such an excellent half-back at football, who took such interest in sport, and in all kinds of athletic games, was putting himself voluntarily under a stern rule of self-discipline. This consisted in keeping away from any place where he was likely to meet Lord Falconer's wife. He was convinced that this amount of self-denial was necessary for his cure, and he stuck to his purpose with meritorious persistency—making Beatrice think that he had forgotten her, irritating his uncle beyond expression, offending friend after friend by refusing invitations—and slipping out of the memories of many heads of society who might have been useful to him in his future career. At last he imagined that the cure was effected, and that he had gone back to that unemotional, fraternal state of feeling which had made his intercourse with Betrice Kennard so safe, as well as so pleasant.

As a first step, he wrote to ask for another photograph to replace the one that he had lost at Ethelred Hall. At first he had almost been content to be without it; but now he persuaded himself that it would be better to accustom his eyes to the charms of her likeness before he ventured to look on her own living self.

Beatrice sent him the last that had been taken, without a word, hoping that a marked silence would be more effective than a letter. It was one of Mendelssohn's most successful pictures, giving all the grace and charm of the original, as she looked back over her shoulder in the conventional attitude, but with a look in her large eyes which haunted Hugh all through the night—and drew him up to London whether he would or no. What an awful amount of misery she must have been through, before those eyes, which used to laugh and sparkle as if all the fun in the world were gathered up into them, could have gained that broken-hearted expression!

"I've been nothing more nor less than a selfish brute!" he said to himself with a sharp pang of remorse, and he sent in his application for leave at once.

He had no fear of being refused, so began to make his preparations for departure without loss of time; and next day his eagerness sent him up by such an early train that he was obliged to go to the club for an hour because it was much too soon for him to appear at Clifford House.

As he sat in an armchair pretending to read the telegrams in the Times, and gaining no information from them because of his pre-occupied mind—two young men standing in the window, and carrying on a continual flow of gossipy chatter, began to lower their voices to that peculiar pitch which not only attracts, but compels attention.

"What's up with Geoff?"

"Fancy there's something wrong."

"You know his style—'Come all you fellows—dine at the old place—and see me off.' Nothing of the kind this time. He cut it as quietly as a burglar with his swag."

"And what *was* his swag? I believe I've spotted it," with a chuckle—the two heads went closer together evidently over something especially spicy.

"Beauty didn't show up at Stafford House. Perhaps—mind I only say *perhaps*—she has given Beast the slip."

"Great Scott, that *would* be a howler!" with a grin of exquisite delight. "Make the Beast sit up!"

"Not a bit of it—he wouldn't raise a hair. But I should. She's too fine a thorough-bred for the bolting business—too fine by half."

"I'll leave a pasteboard in Curzon Street just by way of a feeler, see if I don't," the other replied with a knowing wink.

Hugh started from his chair. It *was* Beatrice that these two inanities were discussing as coolly as if she were a well-known member of the demi-monde! Good Heavens! was nothing sacred to them!

In an instant he was close behind them. He knew them both slightly, and they turned round in friendly fashion to greet him, but the look on his face stopped them. His manner was quiet—his voice cautiously lowered—but his eyes blazed.

"I am going to lunch with the lady you have been discussing so delicately," he said coldly. "Would you like me to tell her of the interest you take in her movements?"

The two boys—for they were little more—broke out into eager explanations, but Captain Pemberton cut them short without mercy. "Don't mention her again without proper respect," he said fiercely, anger getting the better of prudence, "unless you want your heads punched," and walked straight out of the room. They looked after him with flushed faces, and the younger, to hide his confusion, laughed derisively.

"Gone on her himself, plain as old Harry," he said in order to get rid of his uncomfortable feelings. He knew that he was in the wrong, and he might not have objected to confess it; but it was insupportable to be told that he was so by somebody else.

"Don't be an ass," rejoined his friend. "There's real grit in Pemberton—and he couldn't do less than speak up for her—as he knew her in pinafores—so they say."

"That's a dodge as old as the hills. There's Forrester. Bet I'll run him down before he gets to the corner, see if I don't."

Whilst the two friends were hurrying after a third, Hugh Pemberton was walking towards Curzon Street with long strides, his blood boiling as he thought of the words he had overheard. He knew that Lord Falconer's misdoings were the current gossip of the clubs, but that his wife should be dragged into it seemed nothing short of sacrilege. To think that two heartless boys should have

the audacity to speak of her as if she were on the same platform as *Fifine of the Opera Bouffe*! It was monstrous. And for fear of a row, he could not even knock them down, but was obliged to leave them untouched to grin behind his back, because he had given them an unexpected rebuke. It was maddening to have his tongue tied by the fear of compromising the very woman he was trying to save from misconstruction; but no one knew better than himself, that if a man, who is no relation to a woman, takes upon himself to defend her with more than customary warmth, he can scarcely do her a greater injury. His wrath was still in a state of fermentation, when he reached the Falconers' door. He opened his eyes wide when Simmons drew aside a curtain, and prepared to usher him up an unfamiliar staircase.

"This is some new arrangement," he ventured to remark, but the only answer he got was that her ladyship found it convenient, and the next minute he was shaking hands with Beatrice, and reading his welcome in her eyes.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

SKATING ON THIN ICE.

BEATRICE was so delighted to see Hugh Pemberton that she could not treat him with the coldness that he seemed to deserve. "I thought you had wrapped yourself up in soldiering to such an extent that you hadn't a thought to spare for your friends," she said with a smile.

"I've gone in for the thing thoroughly—a man gets double the interest out of his work if he understands it," he answered sedately, as his eyes travelled over her face and figure till they came to a stop at her hand. How thin it had grown since he last touched it!

"All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," she quoted as she stirred the fire

"If you find me dull, I'll go back again."

"No, I must keep you here to brighten you up, or you will get beyond my powers. Do you know, you are the most refreshing thing I've seen for centuries!" looking up at him, with frankly admiring eyes as she leant back in her chair.

"Your sarcasm is too withering."

"I mean what I say—you haven't been to the Park—you can talk of something else than Lady Blank's bicycle, or the new American Cinderella."

"Which means that I've been away for so long that I'm out of the swim altogether," he said, trying to be as steady as the Monument.

"Yes, thank goodness!" with a sigh of satisfaction. "You won't bore me with the 'Advanced Woman,' or the 'Go-ahead Daughter,' and you won't tell me, like a juvenile Duke did the other day, that 'Woman's Rights' began and ended in the captivity of man."

"He was quite right, I daresay."

"Was he? I don't agree with him. Then there's the frivolous fool who measures my conceit by his own, and gives me a diet of compliments. The theosophist, who finds the truths of Christianity too misty, so he invents a thick fog, and gropes about in it with enthusiasm. He wanted me to grope too, but I said I had never suffered from too much light, so artificial darkness had no charms."

"You must come across some queer characters," Hugh remarked, feeling sure she was talking so fast to ward off dangerous questions.

"I do, indeed. The bumptious atheist tries me most. The effrontery with which he goes about with a bandage over one eye, seeing only one side of the question, and calling us fools because we can see both," she said, disdainfully, as she remembered a certain Professor, with whose cold conceit she had come into contact.

"It is a great art to see both sides of a question, but embarrassing when a quick decision is wanted."

"In crossing the street, for instance," she put in with a smile, "Flo would be dead and buried by this time, if it weren't for those nice, decided policemen."

"Undecided, flabby morality produces the profligate; flabby Christianity, the atheist; flabby government, the anarchist."

"And flabby friendship?" she asked, with great significance.

"There is no such thing," he said, promptly.

"Only half-an-hour ago, I thought there was."

"You didn't really?" he asked, in a hurry.

"How could I help it?" looking straight at him, in a way that was trying to his powers of self-control. "You were the oldest friend I had, and you quite forgot me for months and months."

"I know it—I know it," speaking in a short, terse way, as if he were jerking out the words with some difficulty. "But you make a huge mistake. I never thought of you more." Then he got up and stood by the fire, and added, lamely, as he played with the ornaments on the mantel-board. "But I had other duties to see after."

"Then don't *think* of me next time, but come," leaning forward and speaking with sudden eagerness. "Till Flo arrived, I was the loneliest being in the world. Crowds about me on every side, but not one single friend that I could trust."

"You might have sent for me," still studying a queer little statuette of a boy turning head over heels, as if he were immensely interested in the interrupted somersault.

"Not I!" she exclaimed, with decision. "If you chose to stay away, you could—just as long as you liked."

He turned away from the mantel and its ornaments, as if he had braced himself to meet the enemy's fire, and sat down in a low chair just in front of her.

"You won't get rid of me in a hurry—now I've come," he said, in a matter of fact tone, though his pulses were fluttering. "I've any amount of leave—and I place myself at your service. Make all the use of me you can."

"That is delicious," her eyes shining with pleasure. "Flo! only, fancy!" as Miss Vivian came into the room, in her hat and jacket and stood transfixed with astonishment, one hand upholding the plush portière, as if she were almost afraid to enter. "Here's the deserter come back to be court-martialled. What shall we do to him?"

"Arrest him at once—and don't let him go in a hurry," she rejoined, with celerity; and then, as she shook hands with the offender, she looked up into his face with her laughing blue eyes, and told him that she was awfully glad to see him, but she didn't know why, as he *was* such a wretch!

They were very cheerful over their luncheon, and Beatrice laughed now and then in her old hilarious fashion, a fact noticed by Simmons as well as by James, one of the footmen. If she had told anyone what an intense pleasure it was to her to have this dear old friend with her once more, that individual would have been convinced that Lady Falconer would do well never to see him again. But Beatrice thought herself entirely heart-whole. She had been sated with

passion in her husband's case—love she was disgusted with—and at twenty-two all she asked for—was friendship. Geoffrey Talbot had ventured beyond the boundary, and he was lost to her at present—perhaps for ever ; but Hugh Pemberton was safe within the limits, and she felt certain he would never over-step them.

She felt as free as air at present, because her husband was safely out of the way in one of the Northern Counties. That is to say, she was free as to her movements in town, but she was not allowed to go down to St. Christophers. Falconer told her that her father supported her in her constant rebellion against his authority, so that he never meant her to stay with him again. If she wanted change, there was the Grange which had belonged to his family for centuries. To which she replied with spirit (not having developed as yet into the saint-ship that Millie had prescribed as her fitting apotheosis), that the Grange had the dust and the dulness of centuries upon it, and was only fit for a madhouse or a penitentiary. She might be an eligible inmate for it if she lived with him much longer, but she was not anxious to go before her time had come. As to whether she went to her father's or not, that would depend on the way in which he treated her.

"A fine example of wifely obedience," he sneered.

"Why should you expect the third part of the vow to be kept, when you have made the two former impossible," she asked, with flashing eyes.

"'Pon my word, you are a cool hand! You will go any lengths after that. I must keep my eyes open."

"Don't you understand me yet?" she cried, in a tone between exasperation and agitation. "You know, as sure as you stand there, that I should keep straight if I had a blind idiot for my husband."

"One never knows—but I'm not blind, and I've a head on my shoulders, so I only advise you to be careful," with a knowing nod, that irritated her beyond expression.

"You would trust me, you know you would," she said, facing him with a challenge in her eyes.

She was determined to draw a confession of his confidence out of him, but he was equally bent on aggravating her by withholding it.

"Just as far as I can see you—not one inch further," he said, slowly.

"That is a cram, and you know it," she said, hotly.

He looked at her oddly. He had heard a whisper that she was preparing to divorce him; and it had always been his theory that no woman would wish to get rid of her husband, unless she had a lover to fall back upon. As a matter of fact, and quite independent of his own will, he had trusted her implicitly up till then; but now it seemed to him against common sense to believe that there was no one waiting in the background, ready and eager to step into his shoes, and probably urging her on.

"Women are all alike," he said, with his horrid smile.

"They are as far apart as East and West, and there is a line drawn between us—and those others," she said, as she tossed back her head disdainfully, and her lip curled, "that no temptation would induce *us* to pass."

"Talk, talk; but all I can say is: I shall wait and see," and that was the only answer she could extort from the man who was her husband, and ought to have known her thoroughly.

No wonder that she turned with eagerness to the old friend who would have doubted the evidence of his own eyes, sooner than lose one particle of his faith in her; no wonder that her poor troubled heart opened out to him like a flower to the sun. Pickles took to him more than to anyone else, and would clamber on to his knee in order to thrust sticky chocolates under his fair moustache. Hugh swallowed the much bethumbed chocolates without making a wry face, and allowed himself to be victimised, with a patience that made Flo declare that "Job wasn't in it." Sometimes when the boy drew his dark brows over his black eyes, in a sudden fit of passion, he shuddered as he thought of the curse of heredity. What happiness would there ever be in life for his mother if he grew up a prey to all the inherited vices of his father? And then the child would laugh up in his grave face with the inconsequent laughter of happy childhood, and the fear would vanish like a ghost before daylight, and he would toss him up into the air above his head, before depositing him, to the accompaniment of a crow of delight, on his mother's lap. And Beatrice would bend over her boy, with that tender smile of motherhood irradiating her face, and he would say to himself, "what did it matter if the child had a devil for his father, if his mother were like an angel fresh from Heaven?"

Lord Falconer still lingered in the North, and Hugh Pemberton,

from the best of motives, fell into the seductive habit of dropping in upon his old friend in Curzon Street. He always came with his pockets full of toys or caramels for Pickles, and he generally devoted most of his conversation to Flora Vivian when she was not otherwise engaged; but there was not a word, a look, or a movement of Beatrice's, that escaped his notice, and the fascination that she had so long exercised over him grew stronger and stronger, in spite of the steadiness of his resistance. He quieted his conscience by telling himself, as thousands of men have done before, that she was in desperate want of a brother, and that as nature had not provided her with such an article, the oldest friend she possessed was bound, by the most sacred duty, to act towards her in that capacity. He escorted the two girls to the theatre, to the Park, to picture galleries, or even to bazaars, with an entire disregard of anything beyond their convenience or expressed desire, to which the most attentive brother that ever lived would never have risen; and he kept to himself the exultation which made the blood bound in his veins, at the mere sight of Beatrice sitting in her accustomed chair, her lovely face upturned to greet him with the smile that never failed. He was skating on the thinnest ice, and he knew it, but what did it matter if he drowned alone without dragging anyone else down with him? He forgot that the ice might hold a temptation for one who was tired of long, dreary waiting on a snow-covered, slippery bank.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A MATCH BETWEEN ATHENIANS AND ASHFORD VILLANS.

THERE was one game into which Hugh Pemberton always threw himself with all his heart, and that was football. As soon as he found himself in his old place in the field, every trouble vanished from his mind, and he was sure to play with the enthusiasm of a schoolboy. As centre half-back, more than an average portion of work generally fell to his share; and he had gained a reputation in the Athenians as one of the best tacklers, or surest kickers, amongst the amateur exponents of the game. As quick of eye as he was of foot, he had snatched manifold victories from the grasp of his opponents by his dashing play at some critical moment.

A Saturday afternoon, late in November, was fixed as the date of the long talked of match between the Athenians and Ashford Villa for the Charity Cup; and public excitement gathered strength as the event drew near. There is always a spirit of rivalry between amateurs and professionals, so that the keenest interest was felt at the approaching trial of strength. The Athenians, mostly recruited from old public schoolboys, are known to be bad to beat, with plenty of pluck and determination to carry them through an up-hill game, but the Ashford Villa men—a team composed entirely of professionals, are also said to be “hard as nails,” and they had a long enough list of victories to their credit to prevent their opponents from crowing too confidently.

November was kind enough to provide them with a fine day, free from rain, frost or fog, and the fair sex, who are to be kept away from nothing in these days, except, perhaps, prize fights, appeared in unusual numbers. There was a large contingent of players from other teams, who had purposely refrained from making any fixture for that date. They watched the game with closest attention, and nothing in the way of a slip escaped them; but to do them justice, they were just as prompt with their applause as with their disapprobation, and sent up a rattling cheer when any of the players did anything to distinguish themselves. Beyond them was the crowd, impartial and critical, making no difference between amateurs and “mere pros,” but showing a marked disposition to disagree with the referee, which was steadily ignored by either team. Between six and seven thousand people gathered together to see if the Athenians could hold their own against the “Villans,” and amongst them were Lady Falconer and Miss Vivian, and even Lady Crosby, occupying places in the pavilion, who understood just about as much of football as they did of Sanscrit, and were prepared to agonise over every charge and fall, as if death and destruction were being dealt on every side.

Beatrice would have frankly confessed to anyone but her prejudiced husband that Hugh Pemberton was her chief attraction; but Flora omitted all mention of Val Forrester, who happened to be a prominent member of the Athenians, and only admitted a general fondness for all athletic games; whilst Lady Crosby, if in one of her honestest moods, would have owned to a desire to get up a ladies' team, in order to gain that impossible thing—“a new emotion,” if she found that football was practicable.

She was accompanied by Baron Varicourt, whom she had kindly abstracted from Beatrice's train in place of the kidnapped Major. His ambition was to seem as much like an Englishman as possible. He spoke our language with creditable accuracy, and swaggered down the streets of Vienna in a coat from Bond Street. He talked of "creeket," as if he took the greatest interest in the subject; and football was a mystery which he did not object to studying, if the weather were propitious, and he were by the side of a pretty woman. The broad-shouldered, frank-faced Austrian, accustomed to the ceremonial of one of the strictest Courts in Europe, was much amused at his present unconventional position with the "Great Unwashed" all around him. He imagined that any amount of thieves, socialists, anarchists and ruffians, of every sort might be amongst them; whilst Society, as represented by the smaller section of ticket-holders, had about half-a-dozen policemen to take care of her.

"You English have small regard for your own safety," he remarked, after a look round. "Fewer men of police than I can count on my fingers, and a crowd as numerous as the population of a small town."

"Yes; but the crowd is here to look on at a game—not to make an insurrection," Millie rejoined, with unruffled placidity. She could be as arrant a coward as anyone else on the smallest opportunity, but as she saw no opportunity at present, she made no effort to take it.

"You have a better place than any of those rough fellows in the background."

"But I paid for it—or somebody else did."

"That is scarcely a reason why they should not wish to take it from you."

"They may wish as much as they like, but they can't do it," she said, with a shrug of indifference and an impatient glance towards the men's pavilion.

"What is to prevent them? Six policemen and I?"

"Yes, and quite enough. We English can keep ourselves in order. You foreigners have no order in you, except under the frown of a *gendarme*."

The baron laughed. "You are a wonderful people, madame; but how long will it last?"

"My time—I hope," with that frank selfishness for which Millie

was distinguished. She was growing dissatisfied, because nobody had noticed "the duckiest hat in the world"; and now that she came to think of it, she could not remember that any paper gave the fashions at a football match. Whatever had induced her to come? She was out of her element entirely.

"Here they are, Lady Falconer," Townshend-Rivers exclaimed, as the teams came streaming out on to the ground. "Pick out your man, if you can. I always think it's the most difficult thing in the world to spot any fellow amongst a team. They all look alike."

"There's Captain Pemberton," Beatrice said, confidently, as she fixed her eyes on a group of Athenians. "He is taller than any of the others."

Townshend-Rivers smiled. "That's Longmore, the best goalkeeper I ever came across. The man on the other side is a Goliath, but that's against him in stooping for the low shots. Won't you have something on? What shall it be? I want an umbrella badly. You back Athenians, of course. If they were the wretchedest players in England, it would be the same. A woman always backs her friends."

"Especially when they are going to win."

"Ashford Villa have been in brilliant form lately, so don't be too cock-sure. An umbrella against a muff-chain that the Villa wins?"

"You will have to buy an umbrella; you won't get one from me," she said again, with the supreme confidence that springs from ignorance.

"I've every chance of winning it. Whether I get it or not depends on a feminine conscience—about as much to be depended on as a Limited Liability business."

"They might have come and spoken to us," Flo remarked, in a tone of blank disappointment, as she saw the two Captains giving their final hints and suggestions to their men.

"Cricket is the game for opportunities, and that's why women adore it. At football the poor things are nowhere. A fellow can't be looking about him, when he has to get hold of the ball with a heavy man charging him at the same minute, or he may end by sending the ball at the girl's head instead of himself later on," Townshend-Rivers assured her.

She looked quenched for a few minutes, for it is not at all a satisfactory amusement to watch a friend in the far perspective when you have expected him to be in the near foreground.

Captain Pemberton had no thoughts for the lookers-on, as he ran over his men with a critical eye. He pronounced them to be clean, trim, and hard, with plenty of fighting power, and as he took his accustomed place as centre-half-back, with Val Forrester on the right wing, he felt that the Charity Cup was one of the near possibilities of the future.

(To be continued.)

Who Gave the Warning?

By WALTER RICHARDS.

CHAPTER I.

MISSING.

"THAT's a nice boat, Desmond; how would that do?"

Three of us were holiday making in Norfolk—the land of Broad, and far landscapes, and glorious air, and fishing and shooting, and most other delights, and were standing on a certain staithe prospecting for a house-boat. By way of introduction, it may be mentioned that "we" were the Hon. Bertie Desmond of the Lancers, just home from Egypt, Frank Vane of the Foreign Office, and Richard Ferrars, the humble individual addressing you, who am ironically described by my friends as a man of leisure.

It was Vane who asked the question, and the suggestion seeming a good one I glanced at Bertie, expecting acquiescence. But to my surprise, after looking at the boat for half a minute, he gave a very decided shudder. I fancied he turned rather pale, and certainly he shook his head emphatically.

"Not if there was not another boat in Christendom. You fellows look surprised, but won't when you hear my reasons. We'd better wait before engaging a boat till we hear from my cousin—he'll probably put us on to something good. Meanwhile let's go for a row, get underneath the trees on that little island, and I'll tell you the story; then you will agree with me that truth is stranger than fiction.

"When I was about twenty," began Desmond, after we had

reached the desired haven, "I used to be a good deal in this part of the world, staying with an old tutor of mine, named Carroll, who had a small living not far from here. He was a dear old fellow, quaint, learned, and as simple as a child, a widower with an only daughter, and an old sister who lived with them. Lucy Carroll, the daughter, was the old man's idol, and no wonder, for a sweeter, prettier, more winsome girl it would be hard to meet. You needn't smile; I wasn't a bit in love with her, nor she with me: it sounds hackneyed I know, but we were like brother and sister, with a good deal more of genuine affection for each other than real brothers and sisters sometimes have. She was the life and blessing of the village, always helping and cheering someone—now assisting her father in his work, now, with tender cunning, consulting her aunt on some pretended difficulty, and brightening the sad, sensitive old heart by making her believe in her own usefulness and importance—now visiting the sick and poor, now teaching and playing with the children—always merry and good and bright.

One summer—I was not here at the time—a stranger appeared on the scene. He called himself Mr. Felix, owned a dainty, well found wherry—the very one you thought would suit us, Frank—and did things generally in good style. He was a remarkably handsome man, rather foreign looking, with great charm of manner, considerable erudition, and a fund of thrilling anecdote and experiences. Add to this the fact that he put in an appearance at church, and you may easily imagine that it was not long before he had formed acquaintance with the Carrolls. He charmed the old man by his interest and information in abstruse and antiquarian studies, won over Miss Carroll by his courtly deference and piquant talk of the great world, and Lucy—sweet, guileless Lucy—from the very first she was fascinated, enthralled, bewitched, and, scarce wittingly to herself, gave the priceless treasure of her warm, loving heart to this stranger. The year before that she had had a bad accident, and was nearly drowned—would inevitably have been, had I not happened to be in time. I have sometimes thought since it would have been far better, according to our lights, had she then been taken. Such at least was afterwards the constant wail of her wretched father, when, raving and heart-broken, half doubting in his madness the God whom he had taught and served, he passed away moaning into the darkness—beyond it, as I humbly believe, to meet his child again in the light.

The acquaintance with Mr. Felix soon ripened into intimacy. He was constantly arranging excursions and picnics, and at last persuaded Miss Carroll and Lucy to come for a sail in his wherry. I heard afterwards that the first time Lucy entered the gorgeous little cabin, she shuddered and put her hands to her eyes. But it was no mysterious premonition of ill; it was only at a picture, exquisitely painted, which hung against the side of the cabin door. It was called "A Martyrdom" and represented, with hideous realism, the slow fiendish torture of a woman. I have seen it since, and understood what she, pure soul, could not, the suggested meaning underlying it, and betraying itself in the gloating satyr face of the executioner. Felix exhibited great annoyance at sight of her distress; it was painted by an old master, he said, and the property of the former owner, which he had been asked to keep for a time; he himself hated it; unfortunately it was fixed to the panelling, but it ought to have been—and was forthwith—covered up. And so the trip proceeded pleasantly, Felix from time to time whispering impassioned love speeches to the trusting, loving girl, to whom he had become, as Faust to the poor ruined Marguerite, her "king of men." There was only one sailor on board, a sort of half caste, deaf and dumb, and apparently half witted in all outside his calling.

I must hurry over what followed. A week or so later Felix announced that he must go to meet a friend, and would be away two or three days. The day after his departure Lucy went to pay a long promised visit to some friends at Winterton. She never reached there, and from that day forward was never seen alive.

In two or three days Felix returned. He was shocked and bewildered at the tidings, immediately communicated with the police, wired for detectives and was indefatigable in searching with them every conceivable place for miles around.

In the midst of this state of consternation, I arrived, to find my sister playmate vanished, and my old friends stunned with grief—the light of their eyes taken from them, their house left unto them desolate.

CHAPTER II.

A HIDDEN CLUE.

I NEED not tell you what a shock the news was to me. I did not of course stay at the Rectory, but I could not leave the neighbourhood. Poor old Carroll was quite broken down when I saw him: "Find her, Bertie, find her. She was so fond of you. Oh, my Lucy, my little Lucy." And over that bent grey head I made a vow that I would not cease from the quest, would take no pleasure nor needless rest, and would spare neither money, nor thought nor labour, till the hideous mystery was unravelled.

Of course I soon met Felix, and at once recognised his charm of manner and appearance. Nevertheless, I conceived an intense dislike to him—why, I could not have explained to myself, as he overwhelmed me with politeness and attention, naturally flattering to a young fellow of my age. I accompanied him and the detectives on some of their expeditions, and was at first struck by the cuteness and determination he exhibited. But all search was unavailing, and with that piteous wail ringing in my ears: "Find her, Bertie, find her, she was so fond of you," I determined to investigate on my own account.

Lucy, it appeared, had arranged to walk to the station on the Eastern and Midland line, from which she would take the train to the nearest village to Winterton, her trifling luggage being sent by carrier. Exhaustive enquiries had been made of the railway people, and it was certain no ticket for the journey had been issued that day. It seemed, therefore, as if the explanation of the mystery must be sought along the road between the Rectory and the station. It was known that she had started on this road; it remained to be ascertained at what point she had quitted it. The opinion of the police and Felix was that, tempted by the beauty of the day, she had thought she would walk the whole distance. I doubted that; Lucy was not particularly fond of walking, and, as I gathered her friends had a garden party in the afternoon, it did not seem likely that she would wish to arrive there heated and tired. I set out one morning, starting at the time she had done, and adapting my pace to what I remembered of hers. I tried to put myself in her place, and to notice the things that she would have noticed. But no inspira-

tion or vestige of a clue occurred to me, and when I had covered half the ground I felt very hopeless. About midway the road passes the old ruin you noticed, Dick, and the idea suddenly occurred to me to look over it. Lucy and I had frequently been there, and it was just possible the girl might have turned off, and gone there to rest and look at the view. I had seen that view often enough, but never before to-day had I noticed how near the river ran. At that particular hour of the day—the same according to my theory at which Lucy would have visited the ruin—the sun shone clear upon it, and lighted up the sail of a passing boat, till it shone like cloth of gold. In a moment the thought flashed into my mind, what if Felix had happened to be passing in his wherry when Lucy stood there. They would be quite near enough to recognise each other, and then—

"Preposterous," I said to myself, "I'm getting melodramatic in my dislike of the man. He was probably far away, and as to Lucy there was no shadow of proof that she ever came there."

Was there not? Even as I said the words my heart gave a sudden leap, and then stood still, and a swift throb rose in my heart, and my eyes grew hot and dim, for there at my feet lay a little carved cross, a worthless thing such as boys make out of coconut shell, which, years before I had made, and got mounted and had given to her, and which she always wore. I do not care to trust myself to tell you, even now, what my feelings were as I held the poor trumpery trinket in my hand. It was utterly illogical, I know, but from that moment something told me that Lucy was dead. I fought with the feeling, and tried to keep myself from believing it, but all to no purpose. Beyond all my arguments and self rallyings, and mental appeals to common sense, and determined assertions of confident hope, there sounded in my inmost heart a dreary persistent monotone: Dead—Dead—Dead—like some

"Set slow bell that seems to toll
The passing of the sweetest soul
That ever looked with mortal eyes."

Near where I was standing there was a breach in the old wall, and from it a grass track ran down to a little creek of the river. Along this I went, carefully searching for any sign that might indicate Lucy had passed that way. Not till I had reached the water's edge did I notice anything, but there, half hidden in the lush grass, lay a

withered cluster of jasmine, Lucy's favourite flower, and in the moist soil of the low bank was clearly discernible the marks of a boat's prow. Still searching, I found a half smoked cigar, which mechanically I took and deposited, wrapped up, in my pocket; then as I was turning to go, my glance fell upon a sharp snag of a root which projected from the bank, close to the keel mark. Looking more closely at it, I observed that its bark was splintered, and that on the white wood were two or three shales of dried paint. The boat had evidently received a nasty graze. Carefully detaching the fragments of paint I put them in my pocket-book. In colour they were of a somewhat vivid olive green, and a hazy conviction forced itself on me, that somewhere lately I had seen paint that colour. Nothing further was to be seen, and I turned back. As I did so, I heard a rustling in the little copse to my right, and half fancied I saw a man's figure disappearing between the trees. I did not recognise it, or pay much attention to the incident, for my brain was throbbing with the conviction that at last I held in my hands the thread of a clue, and I wanted to get back to my inn and think it out. I scarcely dared admit to myself the direction in which it seemed to lead, but one thing I was determined on—let it lead where it would, I would follow it till I found Lucy Carroll, alive or dead.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE TRAIL.

By the time I was quietly sitting in my room with my *pièces de conviction* before me, the inevitable reaction began to set in. Here was I imagining myself a Vidocq, or a Sherlock Holmes—though now I come to think of it, the latter gentleman was not then known to fame—and on what grounds? A withered buttonhole, which any girl might have dropped, a cigar end which was absolutely suggestive, and some flakes of paint, which might belong to half a dozen boats, and which certainly did not prove either that any girl embarked in one, or that that girl was Lucy Carroll. Boating parties by the score might have landed at that spot; nine out of ten girls might wear a sprig of jasmine; the same proportion of men might throw away a badly drawing cigar—and yet—and yet, after the cold fit had passed I felt sure that these signs and tokens *did* have the

meaning I had at first deduced from them. I looked at the cigar ; the mouth end had not been bitten or cut, but pierced above the point by one of those little puncturing instruments—not common now, and less so then. The flakes of paint still suggested by their colour some vague association, but I was unable to localise it, while the faded flowers only awoke sad thoughts and painful fancies. I determined to ascertain if possible whether any of the Rector's servants happened to have noticed whether Lucy wore any, or what flowers, the day she left, and accordingly, calling ostensibly to enquire after Mr. Carroll, I made the enquiry.

Yes, one of the maids was sure she had worn flowers, she had chanced to see Miss Lucy as she went down the garden, and saw her pick something and put it in her belt : she could point out just where she stopped, and came with me and showed the place. It was at the entrance to a disused arbour, *which was covered with jasmine*. As I left the Rectory I strolled towards the staithe. Before I reached it I noticed two men were there, and I recognised both. One was Felix, the other was the figure I had caught a momentary glimpse of in the copse that afternoon.

Not caring to meet Felix just then, I turned back, but in a minute I heard him call my name. He had left his companion, and greeted me with his usual geniality, which I thought it wiser to reciprocate.

"Ah, Desmond, glad to meet you. I was just pining for some one sensible to talk to after another disappointing day. Which way are you going?"

"Back to my inn," I answered. "In what direction have you been to-day?"

"Oh, all about Winterton, and then on to Yarmouth, beating up a lot of people whom Joyce wanted to question. And it was all no good—all no good. And you?"

"I've scarcely been any distance," was my jesuitical answer. "I felt rather out of sorts, and kept in doors a good part of the day."

"You were wise. You're fresh in a way to this awful anxiety ; we've most of us been knocked up over it. By the way, I wonder whether I can get any paint at the general utility shop here. My fool of a man has knocked some off the dingy."

I do not think my face betrayed anything, though as a rule a fellow of twenty is not much given to keeping command over his expression. At least I endeavoured to answer casually :

"I should think you could: if it's an ordinary colour, that's to say—what colour do you want?"

"Oh, it's common enough if they keep these things at all: the boat's rather a bright dark green—olive green I suppose they call it." I knew the man was looking at me, though he could not, I imagined, by any possibility suspect the meaning his answer had for me

"I shouldn't think you'd have any difficulty," I answered. "But here we are at my hostelry. Come in and have a glass of wine or something."

Not quite the Arabian idea of hospitality, you'll say, but two things were absolutely essential: one was to prevent him having the least idea that I suspected him, the other to see if he would give himself away any more.

"My dear fellow, the offer's too tempting to refuse; I shall be delighted."

"I won't offer you a cigar," I said, when we were sitting in my room, "I'm expecting some down every day, and those of the house are awful, but here's some tobacco."

"Thanks, I've got my case with me; perhaps you'll try one of them?"

Fortunately I'd lighted a pipe; I didn't fancy, somehow, taking the fellow's weed.

"I've lighted up already," I said, "thanks all the same."

To my dismay Felix didn't seem to be going to smoke. You can easily imagine I was anxious to see his *modus operandi*.

"Aren't you going to smoke?" I inquired at length, "Capital thing after a bad day."

He looked at me with a queer smile for a moment.

"You're right," he replied, "I will. Ever seen these little things?" and he took from his pocket one of the instruments I mentioned and—still with that strange smile on his face—proceeded to operate upon the cigar.

"I'm rather a faddy smoker," he went on; "I always use this, and as often as not only smoke a cigar half through. Shocking extravagance, isn't it?"

I made some commonplace rejoinder. My voice to myself sounded unsteady, but Felix didn't seem to notice it, and we smoked for a minute or two in silence.

"By the way," he began at length, "I don't suppose there's

anything in it, but Joyce discovered a woman in Yarmouth at whose house a young lady had stayed. We couldn't get any description of her, but she had left behind a little pocket-book which the woman promised to send me. My man told me just now he had taken a packet on board. What do you say to coming with me, and looking at it together? Ten to one there's nothing in it, but it's a nice evening, and the air will do you good."

Nothing could have happened to suit me better. I had been thinking on what pretext I could invite myself on board, for there surely—if these accumulating evidences meant anything—might I expect to find some tangible proof of Lucy having been there. I assented readily, almost eagerly.

"That's right," he said heartily, "Come along. *Apropos*," he whispered, as we left the room; "don't say where you're going, for if Joyce's suspicions are correct, there are people in the village who know more than they should about the matter. You're coming to walk a little way with me—see?"

And with a smile and merry wink he went before me, calling out when we reached the door some observation confirmatory of the supposed arrangement.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MASK FALLS.

IT was a dark evening, and most of the inhabitants of the village were attending some distant entertainment that had arrived, so we met no one during our walk to the staithe. The dingy was waiting—it was too dark to distinguish the colour, even if, after Felix's admission, that had been essential—and in a few minutes we were pushing off to the wherry, which lay well out in the water way. In a quarter of an hour or so we were on board, and Felix at once gave some directions to his man in the rapid sign language he employed, and which I could not have followed had I tried. As it was, I gave no heed; I was peering in every direction, hoping, rather unreasonably, I own, that I might see some traces of Lucy's presence.

"Pretty boat, isn't she?" broke in Felix's voice; "but there's not much to be seen by this light. I think it's turned rather chilly: let's go down to the cabin, and look into this mysterious packet left for me."

I agreed and followed him down into the cabin. It was a miracle in the way of luxury and comfort. There were numerous pictures—all I noticed of an erotic or sanguinary style, the latter especially being gruesomely realistic; silk hangings draped the walls, on which were crowded curios, costly mirrors and quaint cabinets, and the chairs and lounges were sumptuous enough for the most sybaritic of club smoking rooms. The table was a solid block, seven feet by three or thereabouts, in the centre of the cabin, the interior of which served, I noticed, for a cellarette.

"Let me give you some whisky, Desmond," Felix suggested, "the water is on the shelf by you, and I think there's a syphon, isn't it there?"

To refuse would have been unnatural, and would inevitably have aroused suspicion, so I let him pour some out for me, at the same time that he filled his own glass, and then I helped myself from the syphon he had indicated. To this day I do not know what hellish drug he used, but in a moment all power of movement and speech was taken from me, while sight and hearing and the functions of the brain became painfully active and clear. Opposite to me, sipping leisurely from his tumbler—the drug must have been in the aerated water—and with a mocking devilish smile on his handsome fiend's face, sat Felix.

"You fool!" he said presently, and there was a sort of serpent-like hiss in the gentle fascinating voice—"You miserable young fool! So you must needs go and try and find things out for yourself, and then fancied, precocious youth that you are, that you could hoodwink *me*—me! You'd have been more prudent to have let things alone, my friend: you're rather too clever to suit my convenience, and—

So wise, so young, they say, do never live long; and I am afraid the adage will be verified in you. But there's no immediate hurry. The interesting little preparation to which you helped yourself with the soda water, won't lose its effect for three hours or more yet, and you're such an intelligent boy I'm sure you'd like to know what I'm going to do with you—the more so as you'll then solve the mysterious disappearance, as the papers call it, of your pretty companion."

I suppose my eyes must have expressed the rage and horror I felt, for he rose and placed his hand upon my pulse. Then with a

sneering smile he sat down again, and went on : " Quite safe, I see. Such wonderful speaking eyes you have, *mon cher*. I'll even tell you all about it. We are not likely to be disturbed ; no one knows you are here. With your permission I'll light a cigar"—and he proceeded to use the little instrument I've mentioned.

" Tell-tale little things, these, aren't they ? I'm afraid I must give them up. Queer chance your finding that stump ; rather an unlucky one too for you, you'll find. Well, about *la petite Lucy*. She really quite captivated me with her pretty little saint-like ways, and when a woman captivates me, I invariably indulge my fancy. I knew the way she would walk that day, and made her promise that she would go to the old ruins, and look out for me, as there was just a chance I might be back. I didn't tell anyone else that, though. Well, the pretty fool came and waved her handkerchief, and strangely enough I happened to be waiting at the creek. Then I told her some suitable fairy tale—I think it was that my sister was on board—and persuaded her to come and have some tea. I gave her some bonbons I said I'd bought for her—I always keep them handy, ready prepared, *bien entendu*—and in a few minutes she was in the same pleasant condition in which you now find yourself. Ah ! " and a look such as I've never seen before on any human face, and pray God I may never again see, came over his features.

" Well, there's no need to be too precise. I shewed her a few little pictures I've got—really interesting studies on the subject of female tortures, in which I'm a humble connoisseur—those big blue eyes of hers were nearly as expressive as yours, now I come to think of it—and so the time passed, more agreeably to myself than to her, I'm afraid. Then she had to go, but, inasmuch as I was sure she would make a ridiculous fuss which would be unpleasant for me, she had to go *my* way. This way effectually incapacitates one from committing any imprudence, and so I propose that you shall avail yourself of it, and follow *la chère Lucy*. I'll explain it. This table is really an ingenious piece of mechanism, and I'm quite proud of it. Let me move your chair nearer ; that's right, now you can see comfortably. The inside you will observe is a cellarette. But that takes out, and the casing that remains can be hermetically sealed. It's just a nice size for a human body. Do you see those two valves at the bottom ? Well, when the body is put in, and the top secured, I turn this little tap, which looks like a tray handle, and

presto! in comes the water. When the water has been in long enough—you understand me?—I pull this other handle, and the bottom of the tank turns, and by a simple little arrangement lets out anything that may be inside. Clever, isn't it? The bottom is closed again, the water runs off by a pump which works under this plank, the cellarette is fitted in again, and everything is quite comfortable. I always take the precaution to weight the body in case of accidents. And now I'm going to leave you here for an hour, while I go back to the inn, and enquire where you are! But you may count on my coming back to see you off safely."

He lighted a small spirit lamp, and put it close to me, the fumes of which had evidently the same paralysing properties as the drug, and left me, after locking the cabin door.

Picture to yourselves, if you can, my situation—helpless, alone, paralysed, in my heart a torment of rage and horror, and infinite grief in my brain, clear and distinct amidst a thousand thoughts and plans and memories, the knowledge that my span of life was measured by minutes, and that my death would be hideous beyond words.

Everything was perfectly still, save for the ripple of the water, and the gentle sough of the wind amongst the reeds on the shore—no, I remember, there was a clock which ticked my existence callously away, as it seemed to me, and the lines came into my mind:

" And in the dusk . . . the clock
Beats out the little lives of men."

A mirror was opposite me, and by the flickering light I caught sight of my reflection. I was sitting quite easily and naturally to all appearance, my face was not pale, nor did it show the slightest sign of the awful anguish I was suffering; anyone seeing me would have thought I was plunged in some reverie, and not an unpleasing one.

"Oh, God," I prayed, in my speechless agony, "send help, I beseech thee." And then, as if in immediate answer to my prayer, help came, but help so strange, so awful, yet so beautiful, that I never think of it without awe, humility, and deepest gratitude. Something prompted me to look again at that grim contrivance, soon to be my death chamber and tomb, as it had been Lucy's, and there—there, standing beside it, with one dear hand stretched out to me in aid, and a sweet smile on her winsome face—ah! my God—so pale—so

pale—stood Lucy. She spoke to me—I heard no sound, and yet I knew she spoke, recognised her gentle voice, even, and understood her words.

“Do not be afraid, Bertie, dear, I will save you.”

“But you? but you?” I asked voicelessly.

Oh, the anguish of it, the cruel, bitter anguish! The next moment I knew from herself that all that fiend had told me—ay, and more—was true. She moved towards me and kissed my forehead, and as she did so, the lamp, with its baleful fumes, went out, and a breath of fresh air seemed to fill the cabin.

She stopped again, and whispered: “Good-bye, dear brother—till we meet,” and then—she was gone.

I suppose I fainted, for the next thing I remember is the cabin being full of men, one of whom held me in his arms, while another—the village doctor—was pressing some pungent restorative to my nose and mouth. Amongst them was the detective Joyce, and he was speaking to the constable, who replied:

“I tell you I don't know who she was or how she came. She was young, I should say, and seemed pale, but I was fairly dazed. Blest if I can tell you what her voice was like, either, but it was pretty plain what she said: ‘Mr. Bertie Desmond is on Mr. Felix's wherry, and will be murdered if you are not there in a quarter of an hour.’ Somehow I felt sure it was the truth. ‘All right, miss,’ I said, ‘you and I'll go to the constable's, and get some men.’ ‘You must be quick,’ says she, in the same queer sort of voice, ‘and you will take the murderer of Miss Carroll.’ ‘What! thinks I, as I got on my coat and cap. ‘You seem to know a lot about it, my lady, I must keep an eye on you.’ ‘Now, miss,’ I says aloud, ‘I'm ready; come along.’ And if you'll believe it, Bill, she'd vanished—slipped out of the door, I suppose, while my back was turned. Then I came on to you, and here we are.”

“I wonder who she was?” said the constable, musingly.

I knew! Ah! I knew.

In a few minutes more my speech returned to me.

“Listen, Joyce,” I said, and my voice sounded hoarse and strange, “I accuse Mr. Felix of having murdered Miss Lucy Carroll, and of attempting to murder me. If he returns before I have finished, arrest him.”

And then I told them of my suspicions and the discoveries that had

aroused them; related the subterfuge by which Lucy had been lured on board, and how I was drugged, and the hideous confession Felix had made, and then showed the diabolical contrivance of the innocent-seeming table. Barely had I finished, and while the faces, even of the constables and the crime-proof Joyce, were still pale with horror, when the sound of sculls was heard.

"This is the cursed scoundrel; d—— him," muttered Joyce. "Come on, Bill! You stowed away the men all right, I suppose?"

I heard Felix clamber on board, then a scuffle, a shout, and Joyce's voice. "I arrest you for murder"; and then the tramp of feet returning, and the next minute Felix was in the cabin, handcuffed. He was pale, but his face still wore the sneering expression; only once, when he looked at me, did it change for a moment into a glance of malignant hate.

Then and there the officers made an exhaustive search in the cabin, and found evidence enough, not only of poor Lucy's murder, but of others of which nothing had been heard. In all cases the victims were women. It seems too awful to realise, but there seems little doubt that the inhuman, satyr-like miscreant, had actually experimented in the fearful nameless tortures, which were the subject of the pictures and books that were found concealed.

While they were thus engaged, I heard a sound break from the prisoner: a ghastly groan of unutterable horror. Looking up, I saw, standing beside him, the figure of Lucy, looking down at him. There was no anger or exultation on her face, which was passionless and calm as that of an avenging angel. Then she slowly turned to me with a smile of infinite tenderness, and without a word she raised her hands with a gesture of farewell. Then she vanished.

I looked at Joyce. He was leaning, deadly pale, against the wall. I think he understood then.

"The prisoner! look to the prisoner!" shouted the constable, darting towards him.

But too late! Felix had raised his manacled hands to his mouth, and succeeded in pressing his signet ring against his teeth. A terrible convulsion seized him, and he fell dead into the very arms of the officer.

* * * *

There is not much more to tell. Nothing could be proved against the deaf and dumb sailor, and he was suffered to depart. The Rector

and old Miss Carroll did not live long after the terrible truth concerning Lucy's death came to light. You may be sure I did not let them know *all* the horrors of it. I got my commission just after that, thank Heaven! and affairs in Africa were lively enough to keep me from brooding. But the events of that terrible night are never quite absent from my mind, and I repeat to myself, with a glow of love and reverence—for who but I knows the Heaven-permitted mystery of the answer?—poor Joyce's awe-struck question: "In God's name, Mr. Desmond, *who gave the warning?*"

Nell.

You as comes preachin' 'ere

'Bout 'eaven and 'ell,

Say, what becomes o' them

As don't do over well?

Cause why? You mind this alley 'ere?

Well, 'taint a lovely spot.

Yes, there's some bad 'uns, Lord,

The pace is bloomin' 'ot.

Look 'ere, jist tell us this

'Fore you begins a preachin',

And I'll listen, s'elp me bob, I will,

Tho' I've 'ad no teachin'.

There was a gal down 'ere,

They called her Nell:

She went wrong, they mostly does:

Say! is she in 'ell?

You see, she killed the brat

She loved so well,

And then herself—'twas better so,

For me and Nell.

I was her mate, you see,

And loved her well;

You'll not find many like

My faithful Nell.

Damn it!—work was slack,
For times were plaguey bad,
Hard to get bite and sup
For Nell and the lad.

And things got wus—I went for work,
And left the kid and Nell.
How they lived—Gawd knows,
More 'an I can tell.

When I comes back—both gone,
Gawd streuth, nigh starved they say,
So they both just snuffed out :
'Twas the only way.

I knows as that's a crime,
And sinners go to 'ell,
D'ye think that's where they're gone,
The kid and Nell ?

Why not repent, you say ?
Look 'ere, jist mark it well,
Could'n Gawd 'a done without
The kid and Nell ?

You talk to me of 'eaven,
I dunno, I cawn't tell,
It 'ud be no 'eavan to me
Without my Nell.

Jist as you've a mind,
Your 'eaven or your 'ell,
It makes no odds to me,
So I'm with Nell.

Thank ye, Mister, for your talk,
But see, you may as well
Jist say a prayer like 'fore you goes,
For me and Nell.

GERALD HAYWARD.

Chulalongkorn and the Siamese.

By S. E. SAVILLE.

LAST year our country was favoured by a visit from Li Hung Chang, one of China's great men. This year, a neighbouring country has seen its monarch set out to observe and learn some of the European ways. The King of Siam is an admirer of much that is British ; so much so that before circumstances made it possible for him to visit our country, he sent one of his sons to be educated here. And through his generosity, several Siamese of noble birth have been students in England some time, receiving the advantages of Western civilization.

Chulalongkorn is a man of great enlightenment, and, like his late father, is an English scholar and scientist. His father, King Mongkut, was an accomplished man, master of Sanscrit, and well acquainted with English, Latin, and French. He was a contributor to various scientific journals, and a member of the Royal Asiatic Society ; he was devoted to science, and his enthusiasm in its cause was the means of his death, which happened through fatigue and exposure while observing an eclipse.

Siam has but a scanty literature, and affords but limited means of study and improvement. All its books are metrical in form, legends, romances, law books, history, astrology, alchemy, and medicine alike. Chulalongkorn soon learned all it had to teach, and was not slow to search other countries for his literary edification. In his library are English classics ; German, American and British newspapers. He is a reader of Darwin, and an admirer of many of our eminent men ; a busy and hardworking monarch, taking interest in the welfare and progress of his people. He is a staunch reformer, and has abrogated many absurd and inconvenient customs. Subjects who seek audience of the King have no longer to toil through an endless labyrinth of prostrations and other forms of cumbrous etiquette.

Slavery is not entirely abolished, though His Majesty has done, and is doing his utmost to accelerate its end. Where slavery exists it is mainly bondage for debt, and prisoners of war are the only absolute bondsmen.

Education, which for the bulk of the people is elementary, is

entrusted to the Pongyees, or monks, who, according to Buddhistic principles, exact no fee, but are paid by menial services from their pupils. It has not yet made rapid strides, though the King has interested himself in the cultivation of the people, and now there are several schools of more advanced teaching, and more varied branches of instruction in Bangkok, the modern capital of Siam.

The domains of King Chulalongkorn embrace the greater part of the Indo-Chinese, and part of the Malay Peninsula. Menam, the river of Bangkok, annually overflows its banks, as also do other lesser streams. The inundations extend nine or ten miles on either side and for more than one hundred and fifty miles in length. This occurs between June and November. By this, and artificial means, the country is well watered, and is extremely fertile; yielding luxuriant crops of rice, cotton, sugar cane, hemp, and all kinds of spices, fruits and vegetables. The Siamese prepare the land for tillage as soon as the earth is sufficiently moistened by the floods. They plant rice before the waters have risen high, and as they rise slowly, the rice keeps pace, and the ear is always above water. Cotton trees are numerous, some of which yield *capor*, a very fine cotton wool, too short, however, for spinning, used largely for filling mattresses.

The Fauna is amongst the richest in the world; and the Flora resembles that of Hindostan and Burmah. Among the forest trees are included teak, rosewood, ironwood, banyan and bamboo. The latter grows chiefly in marshy soils, and often to a prodigious size; it is used largely for constructing houses which are slight buildings, raised some height from the ground, in consequence of the summer floods.

The people are mostly agriculturists, but the cultivation of the soil is carried on with most primitive appliances. They also work in tin, in iron, and in gold; the latter is made up into trinkets, and much gold leaf is imported to China, for gilding pagodas. Large quantities of tools and weapons are manufactured, though by antiquated means. The Eastern tribes live by cultivating rice, collecting honey, beeswax and resin, and by the chase.

The country is rich in metals, and precious stones are found in many districts. Bangkok is a great commercial centre, and does a large export and import trade with China, India and European countries. This city has taken the place of Ayuthia, the former capital and seat of government; it possesses some notable buildings: the Golden Mount, a structure four hundred feet high, with high, pinnacled dome,

is one of distinction. The King's Palace, whose quarters cover a mile and are enclosed with high walls of glittering white, is quite unlike any of our English buildings. The Temples are national in structure : *Wat Poh*, famous for its huge form of the dying Buddha, one hundred and sixty feet long, worked in gilt, and its tessellated marble floor with marks of the holy footprints. These, which at a distance look most marvellous, and glitter like gold and jewels, are, in fact, flimsy, at least to the English mind, and composed mainly of broken glass and shells. What does Chulalongkorn think of Westminster, of St. Pauls, of the Tower? Perhaps that they are sombre, huge, substantial. Perhaps that he has better at home.

There has been a great influx of Chinese into Siam, who entirely monopolise some branches of trade, such as metal working, and the making of jewellery. Out of a population of five millions, fully one million are Chinese, who preserve their own religion, customs, and dress. They settle down and marry Siamese wives, and by their independence and secret societies are a source of great apprehension to the natives.

The Siamese people form a distinct Mongolian group. The Tai, or Mongolian proper, mostly inhabit the Menam neighbourhood. The Laos, a less numerous variety, occupy the East ; and the Shans, dwellers of the North. In appearance, these people cannot be said to be good looking ; they are small of stature, but well proportioned ; light yellow in complexion, with small black eyes, large mouths, black teeth, and short round noses. They shave off their hair, except a small tuft on top ; though the courtiers and their associates imitate the King, who has adopted the European fashion. The women cut theirs short, and make it stand up on the forehead, much as if they had had a substantial fright, and the consequences had become hereditary.

The dress of the Siamese is simple, being a long piece of cotton or silk worn round the waist, tied to form a sort of trousers ; and they have a muslin shirt with wide sleeves. In winter, a long scarf of stuff or painted linen is thrown over the chest and shoulders. There is little or no difference in the dress of the sexes ; the female costume is distinguished mainly by an abundant display of bracelets, anklets, rings, and gorgeous gold ear ornaments. The men also have the ears pierced, but use the slit as a cigarette or flower holder. They go in for elaborate tattooing, which is not only a painful operation, but a

marvellous work of art. The King wears a vest of brocaded satin, which is exclusively a royal garb; he also indulges in a cap, sugar-loaf shape, crowned by a coronet of jewels. Great respect is paid to the head, which indeed is held sacred; and to stroke or touch that of another is considered an affront. It is equally inadmissible for an inferior to ride, or travel, or sit with his head higher than a superior.

The King is attended by women, who do all his offices for him, except that of touching or putting on his cap, this service is left to a more distinguished attendant. The King's retinue is attired in red.

The Siamese are apathetic, and almost passionless; they are remarkably lazy; much of their time is spent in amusements, festivals, sports, or games. Kite-flying is an adult pastime in great favour. They are fond of shows, lotteries, boat races, setting fishes or crickets to combat, cocks and dogs to fight. Festivals are a great delight, which they lengthen out into long terms of holiday making.

They usually have but one wife; though some who can afford, keep several concubines. Woman holds a good position, has a fair influence, but no education. She is placed under no restraint, and before marriage is absolutely free and unfettered. Men address her in respectful and complimentary terms, and she is modest and attractive. Both sexes are notably chaste and temperate; punishment for infidelity is severe, and if a priest be convicted of breaking his vows of chastity, he is led to a public place, stripped of his yellow ecclesiastical robes, and mercilessly beaten. His monastic life is changed for that of a menial position in the King's stable, where he is set to the congenial work of cutting grass for the royal elephants.

The marriage rites constitute a mysterious and peculiar ceremony. Before the event, astrologers are consulted, the nativity of both are calculated, and it is determined whether their union is likely to be fortunate or otherwise. Doweries and presents are given and received on both sides, and long and stately processions formed. Precepts from the Buddhist scriptures are read, and blessings given by the priests. Then the curtain, which has concealed the modest bride, is withdrawn, and the couple seated near each other are sprinkled with holy water. Numerous prayers close the ceremony, and many days of feasting follow.

The Siamese are by no means a loquacious people, and, like the Chinese, avoid speaking in the first person. Though polite and kindly disposed to strangers their intense reticence makes it difficult for

travellers to gain much knowledge of them. They are, however, a cheerful people, and expert in mimicry; they are fond of tune and song, and very proud of their national music.

Their laws, though not very full or complete, are mostly just, owing much to the scrutiny of the late King Mongkut and his son, the present ruler. They are mostly of Chinese or Indian origin. In the Courts of Justice, when sufficient proofs are wanting, they have recourse to an ordeal trial, like that of our Saxon ancestors: walking on burning coals, putting hands in boiling oil, swallowing pills, chewing rice, etc. But these practices are discountenanced by the more enlightened authorities of Chulalongkorn's rule. A punishment, admirable in its way, is that the criminal be paraded in irons about the streets, proclaiming his crime in a loud voice. If he stops he is castigated. A nobleman who, according to tradition, cannot be punished by the actual shedding of blood, if he commits capital offence, is put into a bag and beaten with sandal clubs. No doubt, in that hour he wishes he were not of noble blood.

Little or nothing authentic is known of the ancient history of these people. There are records of four dynasties of Siamese Kings, extending from A.D. 1350; the great-grandfather of Chulalongkorn was the founder of the present dynasty. The government is Despotic Monarchy, the title of the King is "Lord of the White Elephant." There is a deputy or Vice-King, who has limited powers, and with them a palace and court of his own. The King has a Council of State, which includes a Minister of War, of Foreign Affairs, of Agriculture, of Justice, and of the Northern Provinces, as well as thirty Councillors, and the Royal Princes. Each village has its chief or Ramman, who sees after its welfare; and the Mandarins or Siamese magistrates, are not the oppressive slave drivers some are wont to designate them. It would be much against their own interests, at least during the lifetime of the present King, to treat their inferiors any way but humanely, as their power depends very much upon their popularity.

They are strict Buddhists, though not of a very pure type; Spirit and Ancestor worshippers, to whom they make many and varied offerings. King Mongkut divided his people into two sects: the Reformed, known as *Dhammayut*; the Unreformed, or older sect, otherwise, *Phra Maha Nikai*. The former attach more weight to observance of canon; the latter to meditation. The more ignorant

have much faith in magic powers, and believe the most absurd and impossible feats to be performed by the magicians.

The Siamese usually cremate their dead and bury the ashes, except in cases where they mix the dust with lime, and use it as a cement for the walls of a tomb. Among some of the lower tribes, the bodies are left to be devoured by dogs or vultures. Until the body is removed to the Temple grounds, the priests pray over it day and night; the interval of death and cremation is lengthened according to the rank and wealth of the person. A pyramid is then erected over the grave.

Siam is a country of elephants; in some parts it would be hardly possible to travel but for their help; an instalment of them is kept in every village. But the White Elephant is the darling of the people, and happy is the man who, in his hunting, is fortunate enough to capture such a treasure. When he does so, it is forthwith sent to the King, who pays a noble price, and frees the hunter and his posterity from all taxation and liability from military service henceforth and for ever. The White Elephant, or the "dirty buff," as some profane Englishman has ironically styled it, is believed by the Siamese to be "an incarnation of some future Buddha." All albinos are treasured; white monkeys are kept in houses to keep them free from rats and other nuisances; and there is a species of white ant, whose nests resemble the shape of pagodas; these are never destroyed, much to the detriment of books and other valuables to which ants are partial.

Of course, in a far-off country like Siam, there is much in the ways and customs of the people which is odd and uncongenial to a Western mind; but one is always glad to recognise any sign of common sympathy and means of mutual understanding between countries, however distant their borders lie. And this visit of King Chulalongkorn's has awakened our interest and reminded us that the world over, there are good, philanthropic and enlightened men to help in the progress and evolution of the human race.

Paid in Full.

By EVELYN E. BOGLE.

PROLOGUE.

It was a damp, foggy night, the station lamps seemed only to make darkness visible, and the broad chalk line that had been drawn to show the edge of the platform might easily have escaped the notice of many.

The falling of the curtain on a popular play in a neighbouring theatre was responsible for the number of people that were waiting the arrival of the 11.15 train, now overdue by five minutes. Presently signs of its approach were heard. A general forward movement was made, the crowd jostling and pushing against each other, A tall young man, in a big overcoat, was standing at the edge of the platform, a cigar between his lips, his hands in his pockets. As the people behind pressed forward, someone in the crowd seemed to recognise him.

"That you, Drummond?" he said. "I thought I saw you at the theatre!"

Drummond turned quickly. At the same moment a man jostled against him; the platform was very greasy, and whether in turning, or as a result of the unexpected collision, it would be difficult to say, but suddenly he slipped, lost his balance and fell backwards, disappearing at once into the darkness!

A horrified murmur broke from those who were near enough to see what had taken place, changing instantly to one of admiration as the young man, whose sudden greeting had partly caused the accident, after gazing earnestly for a second into the black darkness beneath, coolly dropped down after him, evidently with the intention of rescuing his friend.

But now a red light could be dimly seen down the line, and a hoarse shout of terror rose from the platform. Porters came running with lighted lanterns. Shouts and cries were heard in all directions. Only one sound rose above all, and the red light grew larger. It was the approaching train!

There was an instant's hush, then everybody seemed to rush in one direction. Voices rose loud again, till they culminated in a hearty cheer, as a dozen eager hands helped the two young men on to the platform, just as the train thundered into the station !

"That was a narrow shave !" "By Jove, a moment later and both those chaps would have been done for !" "One of the pluckiest things I've seen !" "That big fellow was stunned by the fall ; without his friend he would never have got on the platform : he owes him his life !"

It was in this strain that the conversation was generally carried on by the men who were now leaving behind the smoky station that had so nearly been the scene of a tragedy, while the two principal actors were sitting in a first-class carriage, both hatless and with muddy coats, but otherwise whole in wind and limb.

They would probably have embraced each other if they had been any other than Englishmen, and Drummond might have made a much more eloquent speech than the few hastily uttered words, which he almost muttered, whenever they found themselves alone, and which the other as hastily pooh-poohed, affirming, that as he had been the cause of the accident, it was only right that his hand should help to save him. Then for the rest of the journey they regretted the loss of their hats, and the general muddiness of their clothes.

It was a curious turn of events that brought those two men together, for the acquaintanceship was slight, and up till that moment they had almost *dis*-liked each other.

But when their ways parted, Drummond's hand-clasp was firm and close as he said :

"Well, put the story as you like, Powell, but I'll *never* forget that I owe my life to you."

And he meant every word he said, though neither, then, had the least idea what the remembering of that fact would one day cost Oswald Drummond.

CHAPTER I.

I FLUNG open the drawing-room window, and leant out. It was a lovely spring morning. In the garden plot below, an impertinent colony of sparrows were tearing my crocuses to pieces, but on seeing me, all flew away with many angry chirps and fluttering of wings. What a delicious smell there was in the air! The primroses would be coming out in the Craven Woods, I knew, though, perhaps, one would have to look for them. But under the damp, withered leaves, that had kept the winter frosts away, they would be hiding their pale blossoms, and your hand might sink down some way before it found the end of the hairy pink stem, and broke off the wrinkled leaves that surrounded it.

But *my* hand would not be the one to search them out this year, for Craven Hill, our old home, was "let;" and "let" to a horrid city man, who probably did not know a primrose from—a carrot; and whose object in renting an old country place, must, of course, be a desire to force his way into some kind of good society. Ned only laughed when I said these things, however, and declared that "society" gladly opened its doors to much less presentable specimens of the *nouveaux riches* than old Drummond, but unreasonable as it might be, all the same, I felt I hated the man who now occupied the place.

Oh, how different everything would have been if my dear old dad had not followed the hounds on his skittish new mare that muggy autumn day three years ago. He was quite dead when they brought him home, and the days that followed, when poor Aunt Matty was never seen without a damp pocket handkerchief and reddened eyes, and Mr. Bennett—dad's man of business—apparently lived in the house seemed like some bad dream.

Then I remember Ned's behaviour hurting me so much. How he could find fault *then*, at such a time, with *anything* dad might have put in his will. And above all things, when he was not even engaged to anybody, why should he object to that clause which prevented him coming into the greater part of the money, unless he was unmarried at the age of twenty-five. Especially, as Mr. Bennett said, that under any circumstances enough money had been left him to keep up Craven Hill in proper style. However, on that point Ned and

he disagreed, though, after a little the former cooled down, and things appeared to go on much the same way as before. Till last summer, when I came home from school, a "finished" young lady, Ned suddenly declared that he was not able to keep a big place like Craven Hill, and as he could not sell it, he meant to let it to someone with a longer purse. The idea seemed dreadful, especially to poor Aunt Matty, who had lived there all her life—except with a break of four years, when she had left to make room for her brother's bride, returning at the end of my father's short married life to fill a mother's place to Ned and me. I even went so far as to ask Mr. Bennett if my money could not be used to eke out my brother's limited means. But he had only smiled grimly as he negatived any such idea, and finished by asking if I had ever successfully filled a sieve with water. So Craven Hill was let, and as Aunt Matty absolutely refused to leave Penshurst and go to London as Ned proposed, we took "The Hollies," a nice little house, with a tennis ground and orchard, on the Craven Road; and Aunt Matty obtained a grain of comfort from the knowledge that her bedroom window commanded a view of the chimneys of Craven Hill. Ned, of course, lived with us, but within the last year he had been a great deal in London, a proceeding that rather vexed Auntie, for Ned was always jolly, unless very much worried about money, and the house seemed dull without him. Besides, Aunt Matty distrusted the attraction that drew him to the metropolis, "To meddle successfully on the Stock Exchange," she said, "required a steadier head than dear Edward had." And sometimes I agreed with her, though lately, "dear Edward" had been so gay and light-hearted that I was fain to believe there was no cause for anxiety.

As I leaned out of the window, however, that bright spring morning, it was of myself alone I was thinking, and of those primroses that now could only be picked by that horrid Drummond man, while I was, or should be, dusting the drawing-room, and I had just decided that to this occupation I should give fuller attention, when I heard the gate clash, then steps crunching up the gravel walk, and I suddenly remembered that Bobby Gray, the rector's youngest son was coming to play tennis, and spend a day of his Easter holidays with us. And I had not finished dusting yet. Well, he would have to pass under the window before he reached the door. I would call down to him to get out the balls and racquets; that would give me a little time.

Oh, what a grand new hat he had on! A white sailor with club colours! The impudent little monkey; it was prettier than mine!

I looked at the duster I held in my hand—there was no dust in it, and what a surprise he'd get.

The temptation was irresistible as that jaunty sailor hat bobbed under the window! I leaned a little further out, then let the duster fall from my hands. Would it flutter harmlessly down? Or—no! It was right over him. I drew back in fits of silent laughter, and running out of the room, went to the head of the stairs. The hall door stood wide open; of course I had half expected to meet Bobby thirsting for revenge, but perhaps this was a deep laid plot. He meant me to believe he had gone away; but he *was* there, I heard him.

"Didn't I catch you beautifully," I cried. "*Some* girls can take good aim, you see. And you need not stand outside and pretend to be cross," I added, descending the rest of the stairs. "Come in; I want my duster."

"Oh, thank you," said a voice, surely deeper than Bobby's. "I will; and believe me, no fault can be found with your aim." A tall form darkened the doorway, and I stood as if rooted to the ground, quite overpowered with discovering that it was not the rector's youngest son who had been my victim, but a grown-up young man, whom I had never seen before in my life: and there he stood before me, his eyes bright with laughter; holding in one hand the duster, in the other, the sailor hat.

"Oh! oh! oh!" was all I could say at first. What would this man think of me? That I was mad? Idiotic? I made a desperate attempt to recover myself. "I—I thought you were Bobby," I gasped. "A friend; you know."

"A friend!" he echoed: and the absurdity of the situation seemed to strike him forcibly, and he broke into a peal of laughter so hearty and infectious that I was obliged to join in.

"I don't know what you must think of me," I said, as soon as I could speak; "and you're so much taller than Bobby. I can't think how I made such a foolish mistake, except that seeing only the top of a person's head——"

"Is very deceptive," he finished. "I quite agree; but I think I see a boy coming up the avenue; if it should be 'Bobby,' here is the weapon," holding out the wretched duster, "which in your hands

proves so deadly; I," moving to one side, "will not be seen, so do pray treat him as you had intended, and do not let me hinder the ends of justice."

I felt my face grow hot as he spoke, and knew I looked both awkward and silly as I took the duster in my hand, not with any idea of following his advice, but because I did not exactly know what else to do.

Of necessity this man must think me both unladylike and peculiar, and he had every right to be exceedingly angry. But I think my face must partly have betrayed my feelings, because as the steps came nearer, he added hastily: "Of course I am only in fun, for after all, I *am* the one who deserves punishment because I should not have called at such an early hour, even though it is on business, and by so doing I hoped to find Mr. Powell at home."

"I'm *so* sorry my brother is in town," I begun, but Bobby's voice drowned the rest of my sentence, for catching sight of me as I stood in the doorway, he shouted:

"I say, Doll, don't let us play tennis this morning; far jollier to go primrosing in Craven Woods, and bother the Drummond 'lot!'"

Then as he caught sight of the tall figure behind me, he seemed thrown into sudden confusion.

"Murder!" he ejaculated, and his cheeks got quite red, while he added, with an awkwardness very foreign to him, for Bobby was never shy with strangers, "I—I beg your pardon."

The young man laughed again. He seemed to have a keen sense of humour.

"Not at all," he said, "and I should think this an ideal morning for primrosing."

"Ah, but not in the Craven Woods," I put in, dolefully.

"Why not?" he asked.

"Because they aren't ours now, and the people who have it are——"

Here a sudden inarticulate gurgle from Bobby made me pause. His face had got so red, he really looked as if he were going to take a fit. But the eyes of my new acquaintance were still on mine.

"Well," he said, "what about the people who have it now? Do you know them?"

"No," I answered, wondering at his manner.

"Ah! perhaps you may some day. But anyway, I am sorry to

have missed seeing Mr. Powell. I will leave my card." Then picking up his hat, he added, "*I think you may safely go primrosing in Craven Woods to-day, or any other day.*"

I gazed after his retreating figure with astonished eyes, and then I turned to Bobby, while a horrid thought crept into my mind. "Who is that man?" I said. "Why did your face get so red just now? And what does he know about the Craven Woods?"

"Plenty!" was the terse response. "That's young Drummond, and if I had not coughed to attract your attention, *you* would have given yourself nicely away. As it is, I'm the only one——"

"Oh, no, no!" I wailed. "Oh, dear! I thought things were bad enough before; but to think it was at one of the Drummonds I threw that duster,"

"You—did—wh-a-a-t?" Bobby's eyes were twice their usual size.

"Threw that duster at him from the drawing-room window; I thought it was you in a new hat. It went right over him. Oh! what *will* I do if Aunt Matty ever hears? You're a horrid, disagreeable little boy," I added, as Bobby went off into shouts and peals of laughter; and I saw it was useless to expect sympathy from him.

"If I'd only been there!" he giggled.

"I wish from my heart you had," I replied, "and then this would never have happened. But, Bobby, of course you won't say anything about it to auntie, Ned, or anyone at the Rectory?"

"Trust me," he replied. "But what about him—Drummond?"

"Oh *that* will be all right. The confidence in my voice evidently surprised him."

"Will it?" he queried. "You seem jolly sure, I thought in your opinion he was a 'cad,' and altogether horrible. You've altered your mind haven't you?"

I hesitated a moment. Bobby was right: I had altered my mind about the "Drummond lot," and felt, at that moment, quite sure that my confidence in one of them was not misplaced.

"You see," I said, slowly, "he did behave very well, under the circumstances, and—Did I ever say he was a 'cad'?" Then it was very silly of me. I think he is quite—quite nice."

"Well," said Bobby in a tone of supreme disgust as I went upstairs to try and finish the drawing-room before Aunt Matty appeared, "you girls *are* a funny lot!"

That evening, quite unexpected, Ned arrived in time for dinner. Aunt Matty, of course, was enchanted, for lately he had been a good deal away, and her face was wreathed in smiles as she sat at the head of the table, and listened to him descanting on the muddiness of the London streets, and how much pleasanter it was down here; but I thought he seemed rather subdued in his spirits. Dinner was half over before I found an opportunity to show him Mr. Drummond's card.

"What kind of people are they, Edward?" asked Auntie. "I think it so curious that they should take a place like Craven Hill, and then never come near it for seven months, missing all the hunting."

"Old Drummond fell ill very soon after they took it," answered Ned. "I met his son the other day, and he told me they were coming down whenever his father was able for the journey. For my part," added he, laughingly, "I think it is a great pity the old fellow recovered. Such a tyrant as he is, expects his son, who must be thirty, to trot round as obedient as a six-year-old, and though he is simply rolling in money, young Drummond has a paltry allowance, and has to keep his accounts and *show them to his father* at stated intervals. I believe his wife married him for his money, and very candidly told him so afterwards; she is dead. And another son, much older than this one, ran the old boy into a lot of expense, put his name to some bill or other, nearly ruined him, and then dropped out of life to escape the worry that followed. The old fellow was nearly mad over the business—that was before I knew anything of them—and I believe he is 'cracky' now, so perhaps that's some excuse for the way in which he treats his son. I don't know how Oswald Drummond stands it; I shouldn't. I say, you know, Aunt Mat, we should call on them."

"My dear Edward, there is no necessity, and if you think the man mad, or——"

"Oh no, not mad; he is as sharp as a needle over business, I can tell you; but we should go. Young Drummond is a capital fellow, you'd like him, I'm sure. Look here, Aunt Mat, you and I will call together. It's not proper to take Doll, she's too frivolous, and I'll buy you a new bonnet in town, that will make you look so bewitching, old Drummond will be your slave for life."

Aunt Matty beamed on her beloved nephew, and gave in of course, though she told him "he talked very foolishly."

As we were leaving the room, Ned called out that he could not find his pipe.

"It's on the writing table," I said, as I ran back. "Where are your eyes?" I repeated, picking it up.

"All right," said Ned, shutting the door, "I did not really want it. I had something to say to you. Look here, Doll," he continued, "I'm in an awful hole, and I want you to lend me some money—twenty pounds."

"Twenty pounds?" I echoed. "Why, I've only ten in the world till next quarter!"

Ned turned sharply round. "Didn't you get your money last month?"

"Yes," I answered, "but there were several things to pay, and——"

I stopped, wondering if Ned had quite forgotten that I had lent him ten pounds some months ago, and my allowance was not large enough to give such a large sum without missing it. Evidently he had, for he gave a little laugh.

"I'm afraid we're birds of a feather, Dolly: though I can't see what you find to spend your money on down here, but I daresay it's an easy job under all circumstances. At the same time, I *must* get twenty pounds before Saturday."

"The day after to-morrow?"

"Yes; you give me that ten pounds, and I'll get the rest from Aunt Matty. I tell you, Doll, I simply *must* have it, or something dreadful will happen." Ned's face vouched for the truth of this; all the youthful, boyish look had fled suddenly.

"Of course I'll give you the ten pounds," I answered at once, "and I might get some money advanced from Mr. Bennett, if——"

"No, no; certainly not!" he broke in; there was almost a touch of terror in his voice. "He's such a suspicious old bore. Of all people, I don't want him meddling into my business. No; I'll get ten pounds from Aunt Mat, and with yours I'll be all right. You are a little brick, Dolly," he added, kissing me, "and I hate taking your money. But what is a fellow to do?"

"Keep away from London," I suggested. "It's always then you get into debt. Now you're here, Ned, do stay. It will please Aunt Matty so."

Just at that moment we heard her voice calling to us, and I let

Ned go into the drawing-room by himself, thinking that he would best make his request alone, and when I appeared later on, everything had evidently been satisfactorily arranged, for Ned was winding Aunt Matty's wool, and giving her selections from the latest comic songs—for which she had a strong, though secret, tendency—with a careless ease and lightness, that contrasted strangely with his manner in the dining-room, and made him look like a boy without a care in the world.

Towards the end of the evening, Aunt Mat's beaming smiles were interpreted: Ned had said he was sick of London, and intended never to go back again, unless on urgent, pressing business.

CHAPTER II.

SOMEWHAT to my surprise, it seemed as if Ned meant to keep his word, for the days and weeks went past, and he showed no desire to return to town. Aunt Matty and he went to call on the Drummonds, and she returned evidently impressed favourably. But it was old Mr. Drummond's sudden illness (a return of that malady from which he had newly recovered) that really made us friends.

Illness in any form always appealed to Aunt Matty's sympathies; and in this case they were all the keener, because, as she used to pathetically remark: "The poor man had neither wife or daughter to look after him. And what is a son in sickness?"

"A convenient object on which to vent your temper, I should say," put in Ned, who had just come from Craven Hill, "at least, Drummond *père* seems of that opinion. I shouldn't advise you to go and nurse him, Aunt Matty, though that is what I can see you are longing to do. He is ever so much better now, but I give you my word, he was within an ace of chucking the beef tea at his son's head, plate and all, this afternoon."

"My dear Edward, you are prejudiced against that poor old man, he must suffer a great deal, and perhaps the beef tea was not good."

Ned laughed. "You may be right there," he said, "it looked awful stuff, and he said it was smoked."

"Smoked!" echoed Aunt Matty. "Smoked beef tea!" There was almost a note of triumph in her voice. "Then I will make him some, from my mother's receipt."

"Heaven help him!" piously exclaimed her nephew, as she left the room. "He'll have to swallow a quart a day now."

And I really think he did after that, but it seemed to agree with him; and certainly Aunt Matty won for herself the undying gratitude of the younger Drummond. He used to drop in at tea-time nearly every day, and, unless he was riding, Aunt Matty never allowed him to depart without a supply of beef tea, even though a servant came every morning from Craven Hill for the purpose. But I am sure she thought it deteriorated in quality by passing through the servants' hands, and that some extra healing power lay in the portion which she put into the funny little brown jar, and which she knew was carried straight to the invalid. It was a proceeding that always seemed to tickle Ned immensely. But I never saw the tall figure, that appeared so to dwarf our little rooms, swinging down the avenue, holding the beef tea jar in one hand, with such sublime unconcern as to who he might meet, or what comment might be made on his appearance; without a feeling of admiration, and a secret wonder if—barring Aunt Matty—anyone would ever like me well enough to carry a small quantity of beef tea in all weathers for my especial delectation?

"Dorothy," cried Aunt Matty, one morning, coming into the drawing-room, with a basket in her hand. "Do you feel inclined for a walk?"

"Ned took the dogs nine miles, yesterday," I answered, "and a double supply of beef tea has gone to Craven Hill. Then I flung down the book I was reading, for Aunt Matty's crestfallen appearance went to my heart, and I hastily added, 'But a walk will not come amiss, I suppose,' with a sigh, 'it's only a hundred in the shade.'"

"It's only a few eggs," she explained. "I'm sure Mr. Drummond——"

"Eggs? Why, Auntie, they must have heaps!"

"My dear, these were laid by the 'curate's wife' yesterday and this morning."

To an outsider, this statement might have sounded odd, almost alarming, but a favourite hen of my aunt's had been so christened by Ned, long ago, owing to its anxious expression, and incessant demands for food, two things that he evidently considered peculiar to curates' wives—reading for "food" "subscriptions." At any rate the

nickname had stuck to the creature, all danger being averted by the fact of there not being any curate in our parish, and its fond mistress thought no eggs so good as those laid by it.

So on receiving this information, I said no more but went up for my hat and parasol, and set off for Craven Hill.

I was getting more accustomed to ringing the door-bell of my old home, and having it answered by an important-looking liveried manservant, but at first it had been uncomfortably strange.

As I passed the library window, I was made aware that old Mr. Drummond was there, and evidently in a very bad temper. But his voice that had been raised querellous and shrill, died into sudden silence, when the servant announced, "Miss Dorothy Powell."

Both father and son were seated by the big writing table which was littered with books and papers. Despite the heat of the day, a small fire was burning in the grate, and a screen portioned off one part of the room.

"Aunt Matty sent these eggs with her compliments to Mr. Drummond," I said, as Oswald came forward to greet me. "I told her it was sending coals to Newcastle, but she considers these eggs particularly fine."

Mr. Drummond turned round in his chair, and stretched out a wrinkled, yellow hand to me.

"Miss Powell is exceedingly kind," he said, "and whatever comes from 'The Hollies' is particularly nice. I really do not know what I should have done without the excellent soup with which she still supplies me. I have servants, and a son, but though I am asked to believe that they made super-human efforts, yet till your aunt came to the rescue I never got proper food."

"You're an ungrateful old wretch," I felt inclined to say, but instead, gave a feeble smile, and murmured, "Really!" Both the smile and the word seemed ill-timed, for he suddenly brought his hand down on the arm of his chair, and exclaimed, with a glance in son's direction :

"Haven't you manners or wit enough to take that basket from Miss Dorothy, and ask her to sit down?"

"I do not wish to sit down, thank you," I replied, as Oswald presented a chair, in silence. Usually his father's little ways seemed not to disturb him in the least, but something was amiss to-day, I could see, and sheer indignation at the irascible old man prompted

me to add, though I knew he seldom rose from his chair, "and I was waiting for *you* to take the basket."

"Eh? What's that?"

"I was waiting for *you* to take the basket, the eggs are for you," I repeated in a louder key, fury in my heart, but an engaging smile on my lips.

"Humph!" He gave me a disconcerting stare. "Well, you see, I find it difficult to get up now, as you know I have been very ill. If it had not been for my strong constitution, I should probably have rejoiced the heart of *one* person by dying."

I heard an ejaculation behind me—short, forcible, irreverent. Some article of furniture was moved noisily to one side, and Oswald apparently left the room. The atmosphere seemed charged with electricity. Feeling sure that if I did not follow his example, my tongue would utter truths, that were best left unsaid. I advanced to the sole occupant in the big armchair to bid him good-bye. But he did not seem in any anxiety to be left alone.

"Aren't you afraid of your complexion, that you brave a sun like this?" he asked suddenly. "Why didn't you give your brother those eggs to carry up? You should make him do your messages—or—perhaps he won't. Eh?"

"I should not ask him," I answered, shortly, "I have servants to do the messages that I feel disinclined for."

"So have I," he snapped, "but *I* prefer that my *son* should do them."

I made a desperate effort to summon another "engaging smile," and for the moment congratulated myself on the nasty speeches women can deliver under such a shelter.

"Then you are to be congratulated on having one willing to carry out your preferences," I said.

"But he is *not* willing; I *make* him!"

I looked at the shrivelled figure in the armchair, mentally contrasted it with Oswald's Goliath proportions, and it was a real, irrepressible, smile that curved my lips.

"You may laugh," he continued, "but there are other powers than those of the body, my young lady; and '*money*' is mine. Ah! my son, like my servants, serves for that."

"He does not, you know he does not," I burst out, foolishly letting my tongue run away with my sense. "He does what you tell him, only because—because——"

"Go on!" Mr. Drummond leaned forward and clutched me by the wrist. His eyes were positively glittering. "Because what?" he demanded.

"Because he's good and kind—and you're his father—and old—and he's sorry. Oh, I'm sorry," I broke off, "but it's not all my fault; you provoked me to say those things, and I have not the patience of some people."

"My son, presumably! Well, there he is behind you! Satisfied, I hope with his fair defendant. I suppose after the reprimand you have seen fit to administer to a man nearly four times your age, I must not *command* him to see you home, and return the basket with my compliments to your aunt. But if I *beg* him, as a favour to his old father, for whom he is sorry——"

I had reached the door by this time and was groping for the handle, I could hardly see for the angry tears that blinded me—but my one desire to get away from that horrid, sneering voice. Then suddenly I felt someone else's hand close over mine; the door opened and shut, and I was standing in the hall with Oswald Drummond beside me.

"I'm *so* sorry," I said, "so sorry; I forgot he was ill. I've got such a temper, you see. But how can you stand it? I would have thrown something at him."

"What? A duster?"

I laughed feebly. "I suppose I'm very foolish."

"If that be folly, I love it!" he interrupted, with a suppressed vehemence, that almost frightened me, and I began to wonder what would happen if any of the servants appeared, for my hand was still in Oswald's. "But you must not think my father is always like this," he continued. "You came in at an unfortunate moment. He was very much put out, and then he says things he does not in the least mean. He has had a great deal of trouble in his life. It has made him suspicious, I think. I'm sorry this happened, in one way, in another I'm glad. I would not have missed hearing what you said just now for—worlds!"

A soft footfall on the staircase behind, served to remind him that we were standing in the hall, and dropping my hand, he said, in a more conventional tone:

"May I carry the basket back for you?"

"Yes," I said; and snatching up a cap from the stand, he followed me out of the house.

"Let us go by the woods," he suggested. "It's longer, but a great deal pleasanter. Did you come that way?"

"No," I answered, feeling aware that my replies were rather monosyllabic.

"Did you actually prefer that grilling road, or do you still cherish a mistaken idea about trespassing? I thought the ivy had completely covered that awe-inspiring notice which, by the way, *we* never put up."

"Perhaps that is the reason I give such heed to it," I answered, glancing up with a little laugh. "It would never do for me to despise a warning that had been issued by our own family."

"Then I shall get it taken down."

"Oh no, don't; it's an ancient landmark."

"You must use this path as you used to do, then."

"That would be impossible," I answered.

"Why? I thought you had ceased to regard me in the light of an impostor, Dorothy."

He had never called me by my name before, and I was provoked to feel the colour rush into my cheeks.

"So I have," I murmured, rather indistinctly.

"Then promise me, at any rate, not to toil on that dusty road when you *can* come this way. Promise me," he repeated.

"Very well," I answered, and for a little time there was silence between us.

Our footsteps fell noiselessly on the mossy pathway. The hot noonday sun only found its way through the leafy screen above in long, slanting rays. The birds had ceased their loud spring songs, and except for an occasional twitter or a startled cry, as one flew up from the under-brush beside us, the woods seemed bathed in a slumberous silence. Certainly it was more pleasant than the road.

After we had left the woods and were nearing home, we overtook Ned, who was walking slowly along, with a very moody look. I had noticed that a letter he had received at breakfast had evidently not been of a pleasant nature.

He nodded to Oswald, and continued to walk with us in a gloomy silence, very unusual to him. But when, on reaching home, Oswald refused my invitation to come in, he urged him to do so.

"I want to speak to you very particularly, on a matter of business."

"Business?" Oswald repeated, giving Ned a sudden, keen look, under which the latter reddened slightly.

"Yes," he answered, kicking the gravel about with his foot. "The old confounded business. I *must* speak to you, Drummond."

Oswald let the gate go with a clang. "Very well," he said, quietly: "but I have only half an hour to spare. We lunch at one."

A vague sense of uneasiness oppressed me, as I saw both young men disappear into the smoking-room together. Ned's "business" was so invariably followed by a request for money, that I could not help wondering what he had to say to Oswald Drummond.

At last after a few moments' thought, I told myself there was no use worrying over the matter. Ned surely would never borrow from *him*. And in other ways I could not wish him a better or safer adviser.

And meanwhile, my unfortunate interview with old Mr. Drummond lay so heavily on my mind, that I felt I must go, confess to Aunt Matty, and find out if, in her eyes, my conduct had been beyond the pale of forgiveness.

Poor Aunt Matty! My confession caused her great distress of mind. Old Mr. Drummond, Oswald and I, she mourned over and pitied by turns, till I wished I hadn't said a word to her about the matter.

Then, on the morning of the second day, she was somewhat comforted, and I as much surprised, when Oswald brought us each a note, addressed in his father's handwriting.

"I am to wait for an answer," he said, with a laugh, as he seated himself on the sofa.

Aunt Matty's contained a formal invitation for her and Ned to take tea that afternoon at Craven Hill. The substance of mine was the same, but couched in different language.

"My dear Miss Dorothy," it ran, "our interview, the day before yesterday, was of such a pleasing and enlivening character, that if you will be so kind as to accompany your estimable aunt this afternoon, I will consider it a favour. That our ideas on the upbringing of young men do not coincide, is a thing to be greatly deplored (!) but still, it need not make us enemies. So I hope that some time we may renew the interesting discussion, and that you will let me benefit from your store of experience.

Hoping to see you this afternoon, I subscribe myself,

Yours truly,

THOMAS DRUMMOND."

"Oh!" I exclaimed, ruefully, when I had finished. "I—I don't exactly know what he means!"

"I am not aware of the actual contents of the letter," said Oswald, "but my father would like you to come to Craven Hill this afternoon, I know."

"It's very kind of him, then," I answered. "Will you say I'll come with pleasure, and I'm sorry—or, no—" I broke off—"I'll go now, and tell him myself; for I was very rude and silly."

I felt my cheeks grow hot as I spoke, and recollected what Oswald's opinion had been on that subject and how he had expressed it. But Aunt Matty highly approved of my decision; and I rushed upstairs, seized my hat and gloves, and was down again and nearly out of the house, when I heard Oswald's voice behind me.

"You are in a hurry," he cried. "Don't you think we may as well go together?"

"No," I answered, tugging at my gloves. "I never can apologise properly before a third person. Besides, I am going to run nearly all the way, or else I'll not be able to do it at all."

He laughed. "Then under these circumstances, I think I'll follow slowly. You'll return this way, won't you?" I nodded, and hurried off.

Mr. Drummond was seated in the same armchair in the library, when I was shown in, only this time he was reading the paper, and certainly looked in a better temper.

"I got your letter," I said, feeling rather hot and breathless, "and I came to tell you how sorry I was for—for the other day. I'll come to tea this afternoon, with great pleasure. It's very kind of you to ask me."

Mr. Drummond looked at me in silence for an instant, then he waved his hand in the direction of a chair. "Won't you sit down?" he asked. "You look—rather hot."

I did so, feeling irritated and snubbed.

"Why should you be sorry?" he pursued. "You gave me some valuable and interesting information on Tuesday. I thought I said so in my letter."

I still held that document in my hand, and at this point gave it a vicious squeeze. "Of course you are making fun of me," I replied, "I wish you wouldn't, it feels so—horrid."

This seemed to amuse him extremely, for he laughed aloud, with a joviality I had not given him credit for possessing.

"And what makes you think I treat my son badly?" was the next disconcerting question.

"Oh, I never said anything of the sort," I gasped.

"No, but you thought it; that was easily seen. Your face, my dear young lady, is not a difficult one to read, especially when you are in a temper. But it isn't unbecoming. Good heavens, though, what a stormy married life you will have! Oh, you are going away? Remember, come at four-thirty, tea at five. Good-bye, my dear; thank you very much for your visit, it has cheered me greatly."

Of course the last words, delivered in quite a different tone, made me turn when I reached the door, feeling that my *inward* fury required another apology. But dreading a repetition of his sneering words, I did not stop, and merely nodded in what I considered a conciliatory way, which again had the effect of amusing him immensely, and with his laughter still in my ears, and ruffling my equanimity, I left the house. I was half-way home when I met Oswald.

"Well," he said, interrogatively, "is it peace?"

"I don't know," I answered, half vexed, half laughing. "I *am* to go to tea this afternoon."

He smiled. "My father has taken a great fancy to you," he said.

I stared at him. Was this a repetition of his father's satirical style of conversation? But a glance at Oswald's face, showed me that he was in earnest.

"I think you must be mistaken," I exclaimed. "Do you know what he has just told me? 'That I will have a stormy married life,' inferring, of course, that the fault will be mine. I don't think that says much for his opinion of me. Indeed," I continued, as Oswald made no reply, and did not seem, even, inclined to step out of the middle of the pathway, thus effectually preventing my homeward progress, "I feel so afflicted, when I consider the miserable future in store for me, that I think I should take a vow of eternal spinsterhood at once."

"Do nothing of the sort," he said, quickly, "unless you want to make me very miserable. Dorothy——"

Oswald's voice sounded exactly as it had done that day, when he had told me that he would not have missed hearing what I had said, "for worlds." I wasn't *quite* sure, but I think I rather

liked it. He came a step nearer, and stopped, flicking the leaves with his stick.

"I wonder if you have any idea how much I love you," he said, "since the first moment I saw you?"

"Oh, no!" I interrupted, "because, you know, I had just thrown the duster at you."

"Well," he replied, putting his arm round me, "what about that? I give you free leave to do so again. I always did have a fancy for Katherine, in the 'Taming of the Shrew'——"

"Oh, Oswald," I cried, "you surely wouldn't be so horrid as that man; or else your father's prediction——" I stopped in sudden confusion. What a perfect idiot I was, but Oswald seemed rapturously delighted.

"Dorothy my darling! my love!" he cried, kissing me. "You needn't be in the least afraid. And my father's predictions are like his sharp speeches—of no matter."

At this moment, a crashing in the bushes was heard, and Tinto—Ned's retriever—came bounding out, quickly followed by his master.

"Hulloa, Drummond!" Ned exclaimed. "This is a piece of luck; you're the very person I wanted to see. Oh," he added, with a glance in my direction, but so occupied with his own affairs, that he failed to notice my confusion and Oswald's evident annoyance. "Are you going home, Doll?"

"Yes, and I am seeing your sister on her way," put in Oswald.

"Gracious! she can surely go that step by herself, and I do want to speak to you a moment."

"You are coming to us this afternoon?"

"Yes, but this is important business."

"Oh, *bother* the business," replied Oswald, with some heat. "I'll talk it by the hour this afternoon," he added, seeing Ned's gloomy face, "but," decidedly, "I am going home with your sister just now."

"Well then, of course, so am I," said Ned, crossly, and as Oswald could hardly forbid him, we three walked home together, but conversation seemed suddenly "nipped in the bud."

"Dorothy," said Oswald, in a low tone, as we parted at the gate, "I shall speak to your aunt to-night."

(To be continued.)

A House of Cards.

By KATHARINE SILVESTER.

"WELL, what do you think of her?"

"She looks more like Clara Vere^{de} Vere than Susan Evans—that's if Clara Vere de Vere had red hair and wore a *pince-nez*."

"I had meant my manner of welcome to be all that was kind and re-assuring, and, at the first hand-shake I felt it was I who was being patronised!"

"How she holds her chin in the air! She can't have caught that 'Varsity accent from the butchers and bakers of Hallchester," and the speaker lay back in the low armchair and fingered contemplatively the bangles on her bare arm. She was a tall handsome woman of middle age, with a waist ridiculously out of proportion to the girth of her magnificent bust. The mischievous gleam in the still sparkling eyes accorded with the frivolity suggested by the eighteen-inch waist. Her companion was somewhat her junior, with a personality less accentuated, though the likeness between the two proclaimed them sisters. Both women wore a pronounced style of evening dress, whereof the richness of material and ornament was in keeping with the room in which they sat. Here draperies hung in shining folds, there was a profusion of graceful objects in rare glass and porcelain; valuable paintings were hung on the walls. The French windows opened on to a rose-garden and the air was filled with the scent of flowers, yet for him who had eyes to see, the *coup d'œil* afforded by the interior revealed I know not what of vulgarity in the tastes and nature of its usual occupants.

"That's the worst of those High Schools," resumed the elder woman after a short pause. "They produce such confusion of ranks. Yet in Violet's case I don't see what else I could have done. She would never have worked had she lived at home, and I could not have been troubled to superintend her studies. It was such an opportunity for her to be brought up with her cousin in Hallchester and to go to school with her there. Hallchester air has done wonders for Violet. Her infatuation for this *Miss Corn-chandler* is the one drop in the cup. Her letters are full of her friend's charms and distinctions. She would have sulked all the holidays if I hadn't allowed her to ask her here."

"And now she's here, you'll have to amuse her. I'm sure she won't be the boys' style with her æsthetic gowns and her red hair. Besides they'll have the Tresidder girls to play with. Poor girl! It will be hard lines for her to pay a visit to the fairy palace and meet no Prince Charming!" As she spoke the door opened and a middle-aged man in evening dress came into the room. His hair, which he wore parted down the middle, was quite grey, but the fact that his rather handsome face was clean-shaven imparted to it a certain false air of youth. In the wide expanse of his shirt-front gleamed a large diamond stud.

He approached the two women smiling and showing fine white teeth.

"What are you two plotting together? I'm sure there's mischief on foot by the look in Adelaide's eyes," and he shook his finger at the elder woman.

His rather husky voice was pitched in the low tone of good breeding, but there was no mistaking the accent of Cockaigne. An added gleam leaped into the eyes of the woman addressed, and she laid her heavily-ringed hand on his sleeve.

"Augustus, be nice and help me! I want Violet's little friend to have a good time with us, and I'm afraid the boys won't be amiable. Do get up a little flirtation with her, as you did with that Boughton girl last year. You remember how she thanked me when she left, with tears in her eyes, for her too delightful visit. And it was all for the sake of your *beaux yeux*. But this would be much better fun. The girl looks an ice-maiden. You will have to begin at the very beginning. Augustus, say you will, and take a load off my mind! You can do it so beautifully when you try. What's the good of a bachelor cousin if he can't make himself useful at a pinch?"

The man smiled somewhat fatuously.

"Don't you think I'm getting too old for this sort of thing? To be treated with contempt would bring my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave."

"Suppose it were the other way," further objected Mrs. Ransford's sister, "and you were to break her poor little heart. It wouldn't be nice to find her hanging on one of the trees in the park." The suggestion seemed to fire their cousin with the ardour of the chase.

"Well, I'll do my best to please you," he said, walking to the mirror and examining his countenance while he made a pretence of

settling his tie. "But I refuse to be blamed for any undesirable consequences." Here the entrance of other members of the house-party put a stop to further conversation on the subject.

Upstairs in her bedroom Susan Evans was fastening white narcissus into the front of her green Liberty silk dress. It irritated her that her fingers trembled, and to see in the glass the bright unusual flush on her cheeks.

It had been almost in a spirit of condescension that she accepted her school-fellow's invitation to spend some weeks of the summer holiday at her parents' country house. Violet Ransford was very well in her way, and her humble adoration was pleasant to receive. But by reason of her talents and of a certain inborn distinction of manner and person, Susie was queen of society at the Hallchester High School, and there were quite a half dozen girls in her own sixth form to whose families she would sooner have been admitted. These latter belonged to the Cathedral set in the town of which her father's shop overlooked the marketplace. Perhaps it was her social aspirations that underlay her passion for early services, and generally accounted for the fact that in the teeth of the family dissent she had grown up an ardent Churchwoman.

It was her delight during school interval to stroll in and out among the trees of the old garden which picturesquely served as a playground, with some choice spirits of her little world. Here she talked church gossip with all the mundane ardour of a school for scandal, while her skilful fingers worked at a bit of embroidery destined for some purpose of church decoration. Often she would walk home with her friends to their houses in the close; and the occasional invitation to tea in canonical parlours would fill her with uppressed elation. With unconscious imitativeness she had caught their accent and the prevailing manner of dress. She read their books, talked their language, played their music. The home-life of the shop-parlour seemed to herself a mere accident in her existence, it rarely troubled the serenity of her belief in her own gentility. Her people had ended by accepting her estimate of the situation and intruded themselves and their ways as little as possible on her consciousness. But they admired her at a distance, regretting only the divergence in their religious habits. Indeed, any stranger witnessing the relations between Susan and her family would have taken her rather for a gracious passing guest than for a daughter of the house.

But on this first evening of her visit to her friend's home she was conscious of a feeling of shyness which made her put off till the last minute the necessity of joining the party in the drawing-room. Was it possible, she asked herself, that she could be awed by the smartness of the new surroundings, she who had held herself independent of surroundings? High life as it was to be met with in the back parlours of the Close had seemed such a simple affair. Here everything was elaborate and complicated. The liveried footman who handed her her tea, the lady's maid who asked for the keys of her luggage, had been elements in her new sense of uneasiness. And it annoyed her to think that the ways of these people whose social rank she knew to be inferior to that of her Hallchester Churchocracy should have power to fluster her. She wished she could control the loud beating of her heart as, her friend's arm drawn through her own, she entered at last the long low room where the people stood about in groups, awaiting the announcement of dinner. Susie was conscious of curious glances in her direction, as Violet's mother hastened up to her and said some pleasant words, looking about her as she spoke with a long-handled eye-glass.

"Augustus!" here she beckoned sharply to her cousin, who was talking to a fashionably dressed woman at the other end of the room. He rather slowly obeyed the summons, indulging his interlocutor with a slight grimace expressive of dismay; and in another moment Susie found herself on his arm and forming part of a long file of people sauntering across the hall to take their places round a dining-table, brilliant with blossom and berry. For the moment Susie ceased to be oppressed by self-consciousness, and surveyed the scene with keen interest. Mingled with her High Churchism was a strain of Puritanism inwoven by her early upbringing; the gleam of the diamonds on bare arms and bosoms, the frequent laughter, the popping of champagne corks, made her feel as though she were assisting at some unholy revel. The sound of her companion's voice in her ear, pressing her to take wine, made her turn towards him to emphasize a refusal. What a strange way he had of looking at her—this old man—for as such his grey hairs had at first made her classify him. And what strange things he was saying to her! What induced him to take her, an acquaintance of five minutes' standing, into his confidence and complain to her of the loneliness of his bachelordom, and tell her that wealth without the domestic affections was to him as Dead

Sea fruit? She felt inclined to laugh ontright, though his direct unflinching gaze and the caressing tone of his voice made her cheek burn and her eyes seek the tablecloth. What could he mean by telling her of his distaste for dark-haired women, and how that it was an auburn-locked lass who had broken his heart years ago? Then he ate his dinner silently for a space, lifting his eyes every now and then to bestow a sentimental look upon her. Would this dreadful dinner never end, thought Susie. She felt they must all be looking at her and him; but a hurried upward glance showed each pair absorbed in their own talk and laughter. When the sign was given for the women to leave the room, Susie almost leaped to her feet.

"Ah, you are glad to leave me," sighed her tormentor as she brushed past him. "And I have just spent one of the best hours of my life. But we shall meet again in the drawing-room."

Susie said no word and gave no look in reply as she hurried after the string of bright dresses disappearing through the doorway.

In the drawing-room Susie walked straight to the open window and stood, with her hands clasped in front of her, looking with unseeing eyes into the dimness of the dusk-clothed garden. Her breath came quickly and she was trembling. That ridiculous person! Surely this was not the way in which society men usually talked to girls! Perhaps it was *gauché* of her, though, not to have answered in the same strain. Anyhow she would try now to get out of his way, for he positively frightened her.

She looked back into the room and saw the women in flower-like groups gossiping and laughing as they sipped their coffee. A girl walked to the piano and opened it, and the room was filled with the tender notes of a French love song. Violet stole across to where her friend stood, almost screened from notice by the heavy curtain, and passed her arm about her waist. The black coats began to appear in the doorway. The air seemed laden with suppressed excitement. Susie felt as though she were in the middle of a yellow-backed French novel, and wondered what the people at home would say if they knew.

"Mais tu ne m'aimais pas!"

"Non-non! Je sais que tu ne m'aimais pa-a-as!"

The song ceased and there was a loud clapping of hands.

"Violet, take me for a walk in the garden. It looks lovely—the clouds have just blown away from the moon, and here it is stifling." Violet looked a little curiously at Susie's flushed face.

"Certainly dear. Will you wait while I get a shawl? Mother will call out if I go without one," and Violet hurrying away, she turned her eyes again to the window.

"Ah, Miss Evans, not falsely was it written, 'Seek and ye shall find.' This curtain could not hide you from me. Do you know French? That was a charming song they sang just now. '*Si tu m'aimais*,'" and Cousin Augustus hummed the air with his head on one side in a way that caused Susie to bite her lips from repressed desire to laugh, her distress notwithstanding. Violet reappearing with the shawls, he asked to be allowed to join their walk and there was nothing for it but to consent, in spite of Violet's little *moue* of distaste; and the three stepped out into the moonlit garden. Susie trusted that Violet's presence would act as a check on her admirer's behaviour. The darkness spared her his amorous glances, but as he walked by her side he kept up a stream of murmured compliments and tenderesses, bending low, so that his breath touched her cheek and made her flesh tingle. She knew little of the ways of men with girls, and the one availing episode round which she could spin a halo of romance, and which lived in her memory, stored up as it were in lavender, was a summer's evening walk she had once taken with the young Curate of St. Barnabas. The meeting had been a chance one, and they had strolled for an hour by the river which runs through the fields outside the city, talking of the choir practice and the cathedral restorations. But he had gathered her honeysuckle and wild roses off the hedges, and she had felt the pressure of his hand at parting. The honeysuckle still lay between the leaves of her Bible.

She thought of it all now, and contrasted the man, who was walking beside her with her companion on that summer evening.

"Let us go in now, Violet," she said suddenly, and seizing her friend's arm ran up the steps of the terrace, and back through the open window into the drawing-room.

There was little sleep for Susie that night. As she lay tossing on her bed the events of the evening kept passing before her excited mental vision. That man with his extraordinary manner and talk! A sudden parallel occurring to her between her own case and that of Mrs. Nickleby in her relations with the old gentleman in the smalls, made her laugh out loud into the darkness.

Yet for all his grey hair Cousin Augustus was what her mother's friends would call "a fine figure of a man." Also the unmistakeable

vulgarity in manner and accent, which she would have shuddered at in the frequenters of the shop-parlour, seemed somehow less offensive in conjunction with a display of so much shirt-front. Yet it would be unbearable if his pursuit of her were to continue. She would have to go home before the allotted time. But what did it mean? What did it all mean? And it was only as the morning light peeped through the Venetian that Susie fell into dreamless sleep.

The housemaid knocking at the door with the hot water aroused her with a start. She jumped out of bed and at once began her toilet. The daylight had scattered the feverish humours of the night, and she was conscious even of being in high spirits. This visit was after all an oasis of novelty in the desert of her work-a-day existence—she must enjoy it to the full, in spite of Cousin Augustus, whose fantastic attentions she would endeavour to regard in the light of an experience. And she smiled at herself in the glass as she gathered into a loose knot the red hair he had praised. Then she opened the French windows, and leaned out with both arms on the sill, feasting her eyes on the beauty of the morning. Her room was in the front of the house and she saw a dog-cart drive up to the door, out of which issued a man-servant with a Gladstone bag, which he put into the cart. Some one must be leaving by the early train. Susie wondered idly who it could be, and the next moment she saw Cousin Augustus in black coat and top-hat get into the dog-cart and seize the reins, the groom jumping in behind. She drew in her head and listened to the sound of the departing wheels. So she was free from her tormentor for to-day at least, and she gave what she believed was a sigh of relief. Yet her spirits seemed to have lost something of their champagne quality.

* * * *

Ten days had elapsed since the first night of her visit. Susie was lying in a hammock, her hands folded at the back of her head, her eyes turned in the direction of the lawn where a game of tennis was being played. On her lap lay an open novel and a cabbage leaf of raspberries, which she had gathered in the kitchen garden for her own refreshment. The hour was eleven o'clock of the forenoon, and it would have been entertaining to see the expression of a member of the Evans household, had one suddenly appeared on the scene. For at home Susie's scorn of delights and love of laborious days had been felt though admirable to be yet crushing. Impressed by the habits

of unceasing industry to be met with in the households within the precincts, she had discoursed largely to her family on the *vulgarity* of indolence. Novels and bits of frivolous fancy-work were put out of sight during the morning hours for fear of her rebuking eyes. And it was strange to see how kindly she took to the new gospel of people to whom pleasure was the be-all and end-all of the daily existence. Her shyness had almost disappeared in the atmosphere of social *deshabille* produced by the out-of-door life. The luxurious surroundings, from having had an oppressive, grew to have an exhilarating effect. Every detail of wealth affected her pleasurably—the rare fragrance of the tea in the delicate china cups—the presence of a maid at her toilet—the muffled sound of her footsteps as she trod the richly carpeted floors. And she was rapidly becoming acclimatized in other respects also. During the first few days she had been shocked by the irreverence and persiflage characteristic of the general conversation. Sometimes too when the women were alone together the subject of the jesting and laughter had filled her with indignation and brought the blood to her face. To her own amazement she could now smile at their merriment, though she still flushed as she smiled. And at home laughter of any kind had seemed out of place in her presence, and few jests delicate enough for her refined ear! She did not pause to analyse her own changed attitude, and the voices of her old ideals grew fainter and fainter in her ears. Plain living and high thinking were good things in their way, but it was lovely to be rich!

And now as she rocked to and fro in her hammock she smiled curiously.

She had let her thoughts dwell a good deal on Cousin Augustus and that first evening of her arrival, which seemed so far away. He was expected back to-night—would he behave in the same fashion? Probably he would scarcely notice her, conveying thus to her the meaninglessness of his past attentions. Supposing, though, they had been provoked by genuine admiration and he should continue his queer court of her? How should she act? Would it be possible for her with her old ideals of life and love seriously to consider a marriage that would be in direct opposition to all of them? Yet how pale and cold and shadowy did these appear in the light of the new glamour. And a passion of desire filled her for an abiding place in this world of glitter and laughter where she was now only a passing

stranger. She felt that she could never endure to go back to the life of the shop-parlour with its odour of tobacco and its suppers of cheese and cold bacon. Unfortunately it was only a want of material refinement that produced the reminiscent shudder; the vulgarity that clothed itself in purple and fine linen and understood the manipulation of asparagus-tongs had ceased to jar on her susceptibilities. And she made up her mind as to the course she would take. Before, she had behaved like a frightened school-girl. This evening would find her better armed to encounter opportunity. If only his mood might not have changed! And the thought was almost a terror.

"Is Miss Susie still with you?" Susie caught the rather huskily spoken words as she entered the drawing-room a few minutes before the dinner gong sounded.

Cousin Augustus, who had put the question, was standing by the open window talking to her hostess. He looked round at the slight rustling made by her entrance, and held out his hand, his bold gaze causing her own to drop in spite of her resolution. Then he turned again to Mrs. Ransford, who was moving away. "What have you been doing to her?" he whispered as he followed her across the room. "She looks an altered creature. Last week she was an ice-maiden, to-night she is a Bacchante. A Bacchante with flaming hair."

"Then take care of your fingers," laughed his hostess, with a warning gesture.

That night and the days that followed were lived by Susie in a fever of excitement. There could be no doubt about the man's pursuit of her. He haunted her goings-out and her comings-in. His presence enveloped her like a cloud, and each word, each look she felt as a caress. It was of little consequence to her that her drama had its audience, which whispered and nodded and smiled when he pulled roses for her and followed her about the garden. One hope, one desire, alone possessed her; nothing else in the world mattered but that it should be speedily fulfilled. Was it the glitter of diamonds, or the light in the eyes of her pursuer that had so wrought upon her? She herself could have scarcely answered the question. Nor had she a mind to thread the maze of her emotions. Sometimes alone in her own room she would ponder over the effect the fulfilment of her dream would produce on her people at home, and on her friends in the Close.

They would think her possessed by an evil spirit, and that she had sold herself miserably for wealth.

They could never believe that the grey-haired vulgarian who had effected the purchase, could have made any sort of personal appeal to the heart of their high-souled Susie. Then would follow visions of herself in his box at the opera, with jewels on her neck and in her hair; or of driving through the streets of Hallchester, lying back among furs and cushions in a victoria, drawn by shining horses. Oh, it would be delightful! She did not dare to think of the possibility of a cold awakening. She felt that she could never again take up the threads of the old life. If she could not have the thing she desired, she would as soon go out of existence altogether.

There was to be a tennis party, followed by a dance on the day before the one appointed as the termination of Susie's visit. Her excitement had reached fever-heat, for she felt that a crisis must be at hand.

There could be little talk between the two all the afternoon, for Susie was wanted on the tennis-courts, and Cousin Augustus was no player. But wherever she moved, she felt that his eyes were upon her, and her own danced with the security of her happiness. She played as she had never played before, and the atmosphere about her seemed electric. People eyed her wonderingly. Her hostess cast uneasy glances at her and at Augustus, who stood by a tree watching. Mrs. Ransford wished heartily she had never made that silly suggestion; she would get into trouble all round if anything serious came of it; and Augustus looked dangerous.

When she went up in the evening to dress for the dance, the maid was taking off the stand a little white ball dress, which Susie had consented to let her "run up" for the occasion. The flush that rose to her cheek, as she stood before the long glass, while the maid laced up the low cut bodice, was not brought there by any sense of outraged modesty, such as she would have felt a little while back at this display of her neck and arms. She was blushing with pleasure at their roundness and whiteness, and was reminded by an involuntary thought of the added beauty that jewels could bestow. The maid had made skilful play with the red coils of her hair, and her dress fell in shining white folds. As she gazed, she lost all sense of familiarity with the pictured image of herself, and her heart leaped at the revelation of hitherto unsuspected charm.

That night was the night of nights. The music, the heavy scent of flowers, completed her sense of intoxication. Partners came crowding her programme was taken from her, and handed back to her filled up. She had never been to a real dance before, but she waltzed away now as if by instinct, her lips parted, her eyes shining, her cheeks flushed.

"Look at your little High Church Puritan," Mrs. Ransford's sister whispered to her. "We must be evil spirits to have charmed away all that holiness." The uneasy look of the morning returned to the elder sister's face, and she turned away without making a reply.

Cousin Augustus did not dance, but he stood looking on by the doorway, and Susie felt, as in the daytime, how his eyes followed her about. At a pause in the waltz, she found herself standing beside him. He turned, not to her, but to her partner.

"Miss Evans looks tired," he said, in a quick, dry voice, not looking at her as he spoke. "She shall come for a turn with me in the garden, and I will bring her back to you like a giant refreshed;" and Susie, with lowered eye-lids, took his proffered arm, leaving her partner to his surprise and indignation.

They stepped into the moon-lit garden, and there was no word spoken. But they were coming—they were coming, she knew; the wonderful words that were to open for her the gates of a fairyland of wealth and delight. Her heart beat with stifling quickness, and her limbs trembled beneath her. The continued silence became unendurable, and she braced herself into breaking it with a remark on the beauty of the moon-lit garden.

Was it a moth that had brushed her cheek in its flight? Seized with panic, she tore her hand from his arm, and fled up the garden in the direction of the house. By the verandah, she came to a sudden halt, and leaned against a copper-beech tree, her bosom heaving, her senses dazed. What could it mean? Why did he not speak? Had she been ill-advised to run away? Where should she go now? It would be impossible to return to the drawing-room. They would see what had happened where that moth had touched her face! What should she do? What should she do?

A figure came to the open window and looked out into the garden. It was Mrs. Ransford, and Susie cowered behind her tree. Mrs. Ransford looked anxiously hither and thither, and stepped quickly across the verandah at sight of her cousin, strolling up the lawn with his hands in his pockets.

"Augustus! What have you done with her?" Her voice sounded sharply, and anxiety was mingled with the vexation.

"My dear Cousin, am I your friend's keeper? Miss Evans was certainly walking with me ten minutes ago, but I have no right to chain her to my side," and he spoke with an air in which the unconcern was obviously assumed.

"Augustus! This must stop! The girl's head is turned. What I said was partly in joke, and you have gone far beyond the bounds of ordinary flirtation."

"There is no satisfying you women. I have put myself to great pains to oblige you, and this is your gratitude. Nor are grey hairs to be always counted on as a protection in a game of this kind!" This last was muttered to himself as he turned rather sulkily towards a side entrance to the house.

Susie had heard and understood. She managed to reach her room unobserved, and locking the door flung herself on the bed in a passion of shame, in which at first indignation had no place. One thing was certain. She could never face any of them again.

When the first light of morning peeped into the room, she tore off her ball-dress as though it had been a Nessus' robe, made a hasty toilet, putting on her outdoor things, and stole out of the house before even the servants were up. She walked the long road to the station at the rate of four miles an hour, although she knew she would have to await some hours the arrival of a train that would take her to Hallchester. The very intensity of her misery paralysed her power of definite thought; and she sat through the allotted time in the ugly little waiting-room with her eyes staring in front of her like a creature dazed.

On the hall-table she had left a pencilled note asking pardon for her sudden departure, but alleging no reason for it; and begging that her luggage might be forwarded during the day. Mrs. Ransford read the note, and knew she had been overheard; and her self-reproach was bitter, for at heart she was a good-natured woman.

Little Violet Ransford was distressed and mystified beyond measure. She did not go back to the High School, but was sent to Germany to "finish" her education; and never again came face to face with her friend. Once she and her mother had occasion to go to Hallchester, and as they walked in the town together, Violet looked eagerly into the faces of the passers-by in the hope of a chance encounter.

Suddenly she stopped with a little cry. Against the wall of a house opposite was nailed a brass plate inscribed with the words *Susan Evans, Ecclesiastical Embroideress*; and through the window of a first floor they caught a glimpse of a black-robed figure, crowned with red hair, and bending over an embroidery frame. A large cross fastened on a sort of rosary hung from her neck, and her appearance as well as the nature of her occupation suggested a mediæval nun. Violet's eyes filled with tears, and her mother seeing them made no comment as they walked the length of the street.

Life's Fitful Fever.

By M. HANSARD.

CHAPTER I.

It was Sunday morning, and Sir Brian Leycester was walking leisurely along the pleasant road leading from the Hall to the Church; he was escorting his aunt, Mrs. Mayfield, and her daughter Florence—both ladies being distinguished for a certain smartness of raiment that jarred upon Sir Brian's sense of the fitness of things. As they neared St. Faith's a slender graceful figure passed them, and involuntarily Sir Brian started, for he had caught a glimpse—fleeting as it was—of a lovely profile, and a mass of soft brown hair, which, combined with a certain grace of movement, made up a very charming personality.

"Who is that?" he asked abruptly.

Mrs. Mayfield smiled cynically. "You may well ask," she replied in acidulated accents. "There is too much theatrical display about that woman, who is only our organist after all. I think Mr. Ross might have shown more discretion if he had appointed some quiet elderly man, or staid matron."

"Ah, I remember old Fisher retired,—so *this* is his successor, is it?—what is her name?"

"How do I know? Flossy dear, can *you* tell your cousin what he wishes to know with reference to this—this person?"

Florence Mayfield adjusted her eye-glasses carefully, and smiled a quiet smile of meaning.

"She is Mrs. Drummond, Carola Drummond, if you want to know her name in full, and she plays divinely."

"That is a good thing, seeing she performs in a church," he replied, with an answering look of amusement. "Is she by way of being a *pro'égé* of yours." But Florence put her finger to her lip and walked faster.

"I'll tell you another time," she murmured, pushing on hastily to follow her mother up the walk. Sir Brian quietly dropped behind.

Turning his head, he saw a tall, good looking stranger entering the church by another door, and he caught a look exchanged hurriedly, a flush on Florence's fair cheek, and an averted head.

"Oh!" said Sir Brian to himself, "here is more than meets the eye, and much more than Aunt Ellen is supposed to see. I wonder when I am to be enlightened."

For it was an open secret—well known to him—that Aunt Ellen intended him to marry her daughter, thus securing a provision for Florence, and a home for herself at a stroke. Aunt Ellen was a very clever woman in her way, only sometimes she was a little too clever, as in this case; for neither Florence nor Sir Brian had any intention of meeting her wishes, although, up to the present, they had kept their intentions to themselves. Florence had seen someone whom she liked, and Sir Brian believed of himself, that he was not a marrying man.

Mrs. Mayfield sailed into the Leycester pew, beneath the monuments of the Leycesters, in all the bravery of faultless attire, while the organist played a soft and dreamy voluntary, whose soothing tones fell on the ears of rich and poor with a gentle, solemnizing effect. It seemed, however, to Sir Brian, as if there were a strange vein of sadness in the music, and he listened with a sympathy which he could not understand or fathom. He had no business to be sympathetic with an unknown person, that person being a lowly organist of an obscure parish church.

She played well, there was no doubt about that, and she compelled the choir to sing in sweeter cadences, and with more attention to the words. There was a decided improvement since the last time he was here, and Sir Brian remembered this with a feeling of thankfulness to the unknown.

He said as much at lunch, and Mrs. Mayfield tossed her head.

"I detest mysteries," she said grimly, "and this woman is one. Nobody knows who she is, nor where she came from. I asked Mrs. Ross if she were connected with the Drummonds of Riding Tower, and she said she had never heard of any such connection. She is very close."

"Who?" asked Sir Brian, "Mrs. Drummond?"

"No," very shortly, "I meant Mrs. Ross. She is always so particular what she says."

"An example that might well be copied by others," replied her nephew in his most grave manner.

"I do not know that there is any 'mystery' anywhere," put in Florence quietly. "Mr. Ross advertised in one of the church papers for an organist. Mrs. Drummond answered the advertisement; and he was only too thankful to get some one like her. In a little place like Enderby, it is an advantage to have a lady with whom to work, and I daresay Mrs. Ross appreciates the novelty and the change."

"Oh, if you come to that, this sort of person cultivates manners as a set-off against other things."

"What other things," asked Florence.

But Mrs. Leycester made no reply. She meant to make her silence expressive, but somehow it fell quite flat, and the other two began chatting in a bright and pleasant manner about various matters, so that presently Mrs. Mayfield found herself in the background, where, strange to say, she had no objection, for once, to remain. She had great hopes for Florence, and every word, and every smile from Brian, seemed to make realization a little nearer.

"I saw a distinguished-looking stranger in the church," remarked Sir Brian, after a few moments. "Do you know him, Aunt Ellen?"

"What did you say? I was not listening," she replied confusedly, while Florence crimsoned painfully. "A stranger! It must be Mr. Walton, an artist, who is staying at Mrs. Needham's, a man of no repute, I fancy—at least, I never heard before of him."

This was so laboured that Sir Brian found himself arrested by the description.

"Walton, an artist," he said musingly. "Surely it cannot be John Walton, of King's! He is rather well known, and a thoroughly good fellow."

"This man is as poor as—as a church mouse, it cannot be the same, Brian. What would your friend be doing here?"

"Painting, as he is an artist, too. There are many bits to tempt such a being into our neighbourhood, you know, Aunt Ellen. I must look up this lodger of Mrs. Needham's, for it is impossible that there should be *two* Whaltons, both artists, and both R.A's."

"I never said this man was—" but Brian rose hastily.

"I shall have my smoke out of doors," he said. "It is too fine to remain inside." And with a bow to the ladies, he called his dogs and disappeared through the glass doors that led out of the dining-room into the garden, Mrs. Mayfield and Florence at the same moment having passed into the corridor on their way to the drawing-room, where in semi-state Sunday afternoons were always spent.

Mrs. Mayfield felt ruffled, as she invariably did when John Whalton was named. "If it had not been for that Quixotic Mrs. Ross, we need not have troubled our heads with the creature," she reflected. "She invited him to meet us, forsooth, and, as a matter of course, we are bound to know him, and I find him dreadfully presumptuous. He talks to Flossy as if he admired her. It is really too shocking, and I do not want Brian to see her talking to him; it might spoil matters. The worst of it is he is such a good-looking man."

She sighed a little, and sat thinking dismally. What a trouble life was, she reflected. How happy they could all be if things were arranged as she wished. It had all promised so well, too, when Brian came home from Egypt, in fact, until this other man appeared upon the scene; then her hopes received a check.

Mrs. Mayfield became restless as she remembered how restive Florence had been of late, and how she resented any reference to Brian. "Florence was always inclined to be headstrong, and to like her own way," she was saying to herself, when Dyson came in with the tea-tray. "If I could only bend her to my will."

Upon the organist she did not deign to bestow a second thought; she was an obscure person, whom of course, no one would notice. So reasoned Mrs. Mayfield, but so did not reason Sir Brian, her nephew.

CHAPTER II.

As Sir Brian walked down the avenue of his beautiful park, he thought of many things he had resolved to do. He was glad that Mr. Ross had secured a new organist, and the musician was good to think upon, though her look of sadness haunted Brian.

"I must find out what I can about her; she is very interesting, and very lovely," said he musingly. Then he saw the tall figure of the artist passing the gates, and with one bound he flew after him, catching him by the arm, to John Whalton's great amazement.

"I thought there was only one who had a stride like that," he exclaimed. "What led you here, John? I am glad to see you."

John Whalton had stopped. Now he held out his hand, and smiled.

"Art led me here," he replied. "Art,—and something else. I did not know you were at home."

"Only arrived last night," rejoined the other carelessly. "And now that I am here, and you are here, supposing we turn in for tea? It ought to be on hand now."

John Whalton held back curiously. "I do not think I shall be a welcome guest to Mrs. Mayfield," he said quietly. But Brian frowned.

"You are my guest, Whalton," he replied; and his manner made the artist turn at once. He was glad to accompany Sir Brian for more reasons than one. He would see Florence, under Sir Brian's wing, and surely not even Mrs. Mayfield could object to that. Under these influencing thoughts he smiled, and became more genial—more like the "Whalton, of King's," whom Brian remembered so well; and when they reached the Hall, there was some one else whose looks brightened, and who became, all at once, a happier-hearted person, upon whom Sir Brian beamed with kindness, though Mrs. Mayfield frowned ponderously. Even Mrs. Mayfield was rather afraid of Sir Brian.

Carola Drummond had seen the two men go up the drive towards the Hall, and she sighed as the trees hid them at last from view. She had heard Mrs. Ross speak warmly of Sir Brian, his goodness to the poor, his concern for the welfare of all the tenants; but she knew, with a woman's ready intuition, that Mrs. Mayfield was a difficult person, and that she was inimical to her.

"I am such a humble individual that I wonder why she should object to me," she mused; though no thought of her own loveliness crossed her mind. "I do hope she will not put Sir Brian against me, for in that case, he might influence the Vicar, and that would be fatal. Why can I not have a little peace in my life? I am so poor, and so forlorn; there is only one faithful friend left to me, and she is old and toil worn too."

Her eyes filled with tears: truly hers was not a position to be envied, neither was it one to awaken anyone's jealousy; yet it had awakened Mrs. Mayfield's, and it had disturbed her plans, though of this Carola had never dreamed. She had come to Enderby with an object, assuredly; but what that was, no one, not even Mrs. Ross, could have divined.

The old servant, who had followed Mrs. Drummond's fortunes, came to the door and held it open for her young mistress, and a pleasing odour of hot cakes steamed out to greet Carola.

"You're just in time, ma'am," said Elizabeth. "The kettle's right on the boil, and I have got a little nice cream. Come your ways in, my dear; you're about tired out."

"The day is warm," said Carola, as she allowed Elizabeth to deposit her in a large arm-chair, and divest her of her bonnet and cloak, "and the service seemed long."

"Aye, the bairns would be fidgetty too, I reckon; children's services are none so pleasant for those who have to conduct them, I reckon."

"Beggars cannot be choosers, Betty," said Mrs. Drummond, wearily sipping the fragrant tea which Elizabeth brought in a dainty cup, a relic of days long since gone by. With a few similar "relics," Carola had contrived to make her tiny home look home-like; and it was really very pretty indeed, and comfortable as Elizabeth's tidy fingers could make it.

The old woman often contrasted the present with the past, and did her best to remedy matters as well as she could, but "bad's the best," she used to say, with a shake of the head. It was "bad" decidedly, to remember things. Her eyes would often fill with tears as she thought what a bright and lively girl Carola had been, and how hardly fate had dealt with her. The hasty marriage, the sudden death of Carola's sole parent—her father, the subsequent poverty into which she had been plunged, were all imprinted deeply on the

good woman's heart. That Carola's marriage had turned out ill, she also knew, although this was a forbidden subject in the cottage. Roderick Drummond had disappeared abruptly from the scene, choosing a life of adventure and speculation abroad, rather than the tamer one of domesticity in England.

Enderby gave out that Mrs. Drummond was a widow, and neither mistress nor servant contradicted the assertion; but Elizabeth was fully aware that Carola always sought by preference to fix her home in quiet places, remote from excitement of any kind; because here there would surely be less danger of attraction for her husband. She knew, also, that he had a curious fancy for turning up when least required; but not even Elizabeth knew so well as did Carola, how unpleasant he could make his visits when he chose. There was nothing to be got out of a woman who had to earn her living by teaching music, and serving as a village organist; and fortunately for Carola, Roderick recognised this perfectly well; Carola hoped he would never find her at Enderby—her new refuge. As things were, she could just manage to keep a roof over her head, and supply the simple wants of her small household; for Elizabeth was the embodiment of care and economy, and could make Carola's shillings go as far—if not farther—than anyone else's.

And Carola found herself increasingly happy at Enderby. The Rosses were kind to her, they invited her to the Vicarage, and tried to gain friends and pupils for her; for Mrs. Ross was a sympathetic soul, and felt interested in this lonely young woman who had come to live among them. She lent her books, and was not happy unless Carola yielded to her entreaties, and spent as much of her spare time as possible with her. So the summer passed swiftly and almost happily; but for the constant dread that oppressed her, it would have gone quite happily. At any rate, Carola was more than content. Her smile came oftener, and her sighs were fewer. Chance threw her a good deal in the way of Brian Leycester. She met him often—and admired his fine upright character—as who did not? She became very friendly with Florence Mayfield, and—strange to say—it came to be a regular thing that this young lady and John Whalton found her cottage a convenient spot at which to meet once or twice a week. Carola had not the heart to forbid these meetings, she felt so sorry for the girl whose mother was proving such an impossible person.

With the early autumn came the "shooters,"—one shooting-box after another opening its doors to entertain guests; and the hills became quite gay with parties of men, and dogs. Enderby always awoke to enthusiasm over the shooting season. It meant a good time for everybody. Even the services at St. Faith's were influenced by the incursion of strangers; the boys cleared their throats and sang better, the men clamoured for anthems with which to bewilder the unsuspecting visitors; and—"tell it not in Gath!"—the very Vicar felt bound to exert himself and cudgel his brains to some big effort in the sermon way with which to prove effective. The Church was full at this season; and it was whispered that the village obtained its fashions from the costumes thus imported. Carola alone seemed to pursue her way as before, unmoved by the excitement around. She had no time in the week to give to the "shooters," and on Sundays she had enough to do without wasting her thoughts on them.

Lately she had not felt that strange dread of hearing from Roderick that had hitherto made her life so bitter. She had grown absorbed in her new duties, and spent her leisure hours in cultivating the small garden at the back of the cottage, where she reared all manner of flowers, which served to brighten her home. It was a pleasant change of occupation, and gave her a certain amount of fresh air which was needful and healthy. Mrs. Mayfield often saw her thus employed, and made a few disagreeable comments on Carola's "*motives*": when she returned to the Hall.

She chanced to be walking by the cottage one morning while Carola was thus busy, and at the same time a man, coming in the opposite direction stopped too, and looked over the hedge, with a very peculiar expression on his face. As Mrs. Mayfield passed, she heard an exclamation, and glancing back, she saw him fling open the gate, two strides bringing him to the side of Mrs. Drummond, who, with uplifted head, was quietly watching his advance.

"What brings you here?" he asked angrily, and she—almost as sternly—put the same question to him. Then Mrs. Mayfield heard no more, for common decency required that she should "move on;" but she did not hesitate to make capital of the affair. It served for the whole of dinner that evening, and was really something sensational, out of which Mrs. Mayfield could easily construct a good deal. She had discovered by this time that the stranger was staying

at Birdhope with the Temples; and she began to wonder as to whether it would not be her duty to go over and warn them as to the man who was their guest. "He cannot be nice if he knows her," she murmured, when the others left her—wearied of the incessant harping. "It is not fair to the Temples that they should remain ignorant."

Her own ignorance on the subject was not troubling her in the least; neither did the exceeding coldness of Sir Brian disturb her mind. She was one of those terrible women who "say what they think"—regardless of others; and she did not care for consequences.

Upon a small substratum of fact she managed to base a large structure of falsity; for, although Roderick Drummond had unquestionably seen, and been seen by Carola, yet he had spoken few words, and had even striven—after the first angry amazement—to address his wife in his most genial manner, for it was no part of his present purpose to cross swords with her. He had other game in view—and game better worth his while, into the bargain. The Temples were worth knowing, they could be very useful to him; and as for Carola—why, it was rather a nuisance to have run across her just then. He only hoped she would have sense enough to hold her peace, as one word might easily destroy his "bubble reputation;" moreover, he had discovered, from what she said, that she was a mere teacher of music, and so she was not worth much in his eyes. He was not, therefore, averse to make terms of any sort with the woman he had so cruelly wronged. When he left her he was almost affable—but Carola, who understood him, sighed deeply. She knew him too well—gambler—rogue—villain, as he was at heart. She could not help contrasting him with Brian Leycester—the one so upright and honourable, the other, so depraved and vicious.

"Perhaps I had better leave Enderby now," she mused. "If he begins to visit here I must go. It seems hard to be always flying from misery, and I am no sooner settled than I have to move once more."

There was no pleasure in the idea of leaving Enderby; instead, she could not restrain the tears that filled her eyes. It was all so hard—so bitter for poor Carola; nor, indeed, was seeing her husband on that unlucky day the worst thing that happened; for Mrs. Mayfield had been so impressed by her discovery of Carola's wickedness in receiving a visitor, that she spread the news—with additions—

first at the Vicarage, where the tale was met with cold incredulity, and then at other houses, where it probably made more sensation.

It may safely be assumed that the story did not lose by being repeated, although the victim—Carola—did not hear about it until long afterwards.

If Mrs. Mayfield hoped by this means to turn Sir Brian against Mrs. Drummond, she failed signally. He became kinder than before; and many baskets of flowers and fruit found their way to the lowly dwelling, expressions of the sympathy that might not be spoken. This touched Carola very deeply.

But, "man proposes and Providence disposes," says the proverb.

While plots and counter-plots raged round poor Carola's unconscious head, the unexpected happened.

It was a glorious morning, and the moors were one mass of vivid purple, upon which the sunlight fell with dazzling radiance. A soft southerly wind just lifted the fern-fronds as it passed over, but it disturbed nothing—not even the down upon the wings of the butterflies that hovered to and fro, in company with the honey-making bees. The shooters were astir early, hoping for big bags; the dogs, the keepers, and the men tramped along merrily, making their way over the heather. Carola heard the voices and the barks as the groups from Birdhope passed the cottage; she could hear her husband's laugh, and she knew he would be at his very best that morning. Though she did not know it, Sir Brian was there, too; taking stock of the stranger, whom he did not know—but not too well pleased with him. They all swept on towards Hollow-Tree Wood, and she, putting on her hat and gloves, went down the village to give a lesson at Duns houses, a lonely farm on the road to Byrness. That lesson took an hour, and she walked fast on her way there and back. As she returned she found the village in a ferment. Something had evidently gone wrong, and Carola wondered. There seemed dogs and men everywhere on the green, in front of the inn, standing about the road. Someone darted out and caught her sleeve.

"Did you ever hear such a thing, Mrs. Drummond?—You did not know it? Oh, where have you been? They say"—here the voice was carefully lowered—"They say Mr. Temple is nearly distracted, but others declare he deserved it. I don't know the truth, but——"

Carola, confused, surprised—arrested—turned to the speaker.

"Is some one hurt, Mary Deans?" she asked, unravelling the story which the other was so anxious to tell. "Then who is it?" Some sense of an impending crisis made her leap to a conclusion. She seemed to know what was coming. Afterwards she remembered that she had never heard Mary Dean's reply—"Roderick" leaped into her mind. He was always so reckless! She made her way through the men round the inn door, and went calmly inside, with Mary Deans clinging in surprise to her arm. She seemed like one walking in her sleep; but everyone moved to let her pass. The landlady, indeed, came forward; but seeing the organist, she gave her credit for more knowledge still, and said she "hoped she could do something for the poor man over yonder"—so Carola went on.

Yes, she was right. It was Roderick who had been injured. He lay, with eyes closed, upon the sofa; his life ebbing away—his face deathly in its whiteness and ghastliness. Carola bent over him, and he opened his eyes.

"You!" he said faintly. "Of all people—*you*!—I'm played out, Carola—*Done*!"

Her whispered words may have reached his ear—who knows! The flicker of a smile crept over his face—then, with his eyes fixed on hers, he drew a long shuddering breath and passed from this world's stage for ever.

It was said that Mr. Temple could never forgive himself: for, after all—humanity is sacred, and life is life. He had unwittingly wounded a fellow-man to death, and his contrition was painful to see.

Mrs. Mayfield made capital of the last scene, and "exposed" Carola to her heart's content; but great was her anger when she found that Sir Brian and the Rosses knew more of Carola's history than she did, and that they but loved her more for all that she had endured. The last and greatest pang came a year or two later, however, when, to her unutterable dismay, Sir Brian announced that he was thinking of bringing home a bride to the hall, and that she was a lady whom he had loved for a long, long time in secret—that lady being none other than Carola Drummond, the music-teacher.

Mrs. Mayfield received two shocks in one morning; for no sooner

had she heard Sir Brian's unwelcome tidings, than she found John Whalton waiting to interview her. That he should have dared to woo her daughter was too dreadful, though her feelings were soothed by the knowledge that he was rich enough to marry whom he pleased. She never fully forgave Florence, however for her indiscretion in allowing Brian to slip through her fingers; nor did she forgive Brian for preferring a penniless organist to her own smarter daughter. The young folks contrived to exist, in spite of her displeasure. They were happy. They loved, and were beloved; and they looked forward to happiness in the days that were to come.

Sir Brian never tired of telling Carola his love; and she, with face upturned, thanked Heaven for the blessedness that had come, at last, to her sorely-wounded spirit.

Life, love, joy—the best gifts earth has to give—came to cast their rays upon the path these two elected to travel hand-in-hand.

"My darling!" whispered Sir Brian, "With you by my side, I ask no other bliss;" and her reply—if she made any—was heard only by him.

* * * *

Mrs. Mayfield, in her disgust, fled from Enderby. She was too mortified to remain there; but she consoled herself by saying that she was sure her daughter and her nephew "lost prestige" by their "wretched marriages." No one agrees with her. In blessing others—and in being blessed—those she hates find love and peace to cheer them in their daily life.

The Forgotten Art of Conversation.

By A. CLARKE WHITE.

" 'Tis true, 'tis pity, and pity 'tis, 'tis true," may well be the burden of our lament when we reflect on the bygone glories of dialogue and monologue as set forth by the admiring Boswell and the admired Richardson, not to mention the "Spectator's" instructive conversations, evidently intended to supply a "long felt want" at our great-grandfathers' breakfast tables. The age of conversation is over, alas, and we—degenerate descendants of such superior ancestors—must content ourselves with mere talk. Now, talk is all very well, but it is not conversation, any more than police-court reports are literature, though they, in common with Meredith's novels, appear in print. It is not conversation, for instance, to say to an acquaintance "Hullo, old chap, how d'ye do? Glad to see you. Have a whisky and soda? No time? Well—so long!" Such a speech may have the merit of brevity and directness, but truly! it lacks elegance. Our grandfathers were a trifle long-winded, it must be owned, but they made up for it in courteous politeness at least. A century ago the above greeting would have been rendered thus—"Ah, my good friend, Mr. Brown! I am rejoiced to see you! You are in good health, I trust? May I invite you to drink a glass of ale with me? No? you are pressed for time? Dear me, I am extremely sorry to miss the pleasure of your society. Good-bye, my dear friend, good-bye!" and so on.

If we refer to writers of the past century, for instance, we find that one of the principal objects of conversation in their day was *improvement*. When Clarissa Harlowe harangued the wicked Lovelace she fired off volleys of moral maxims point blank at him, and had plenty to spare afterwards for her family as well. We cannot suppose that she meant purposely to be didactic; it was rather the spirit of the age in print, the spirit that pervaded the eighteenth century and the early part of the nineteenth, from the time of Pope to Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen. It was as unfashionable then to be abrupt or blunt in speech as it was to be so in manner. A Chesterfieldian bow would go ill with "How d'ye do, old chap?"

and it would be equally impossible to combine "My dear sir—a thousand pardons—permit me to apologise!" when one hurried gentleman runs full tilt into another on his way to catch a train. Our grandmothers bestowed curtseys (how pretty the word is in its unabridged form *courtesy* !) upon their friends at meeting and parting, and we can imagine the high-flown compliments that pretty Phillis received from her gallant admirers during the walks in Kensington Gardens or the Mall, the which she reciprocated with blushes and a curtsey that exhibited her little sandalled feet and clocked stockings in the most correct "first position." Phillis liked to be told that she was "radiant as Diana," even if she did not know who the lady was, and that she was "sister to the Graces," and all the rest of it, and she liked the formal deferential bow of her "humble servant," with hat in one extended hand, and the other resting on his waistcoat somewhere in the region of his heart. These, and other such amenities of conversation were familiar to their mouths as household words to our ancestors, and constituted the acknowledged distinction between a gentleman and the "vulgar."

Conversation, as generally understood at present, consists, too often, of autobiography in instalments. One's acquaintances yearn to pour out their family history and their own to our unwilling ears, convinced that as nothing in the world is more interesting to themselves, it must therefore be equally so to their friends. This, by the way, was a vice not altogether unknown to our grand-parents, but was excusable in their days, inasmuch as their friends knew them and their private affairs intimately enough to make such gossip entertaining.

The Chesterfieldian conversations or Johnsonian dialogues might perhaps produce a somnolent effect on a modern and irreverent listener, but he could not fail to admire the rounded periods, or to be impressed by the portly doctor's dogmatic sententiousness. A man who could compile a dictionary should certainly have a great command of words, and it is on record that Boswell's hero used them with a long-winded verbosity that enchanted his admiring audience. We do not doubt that charming Mrs. Thrale sat and listened with rapt attention, while poor Mrs. Williams, in a quiet corner, looked fondly out at the ponderous, snuff-sprinkled speaker ; Boswell, eager and alert, hung on his utterances, and Goldsmith would deferentially assent while he inwardly contradicted. The

very form of his speech commanded attention. It held his hearers as did the ancient mariner's glittering eye. "Sir," said Dr. Johnson—and you were transfixed, hypnotised, without hope of escape, and listened in spell-bound silence.

There were wits in those days, it must be remembered. Men who charmed by the polish and elegance with which they disposed of a reputation with an epigram, or a political crisis with a *bon mot* famous sayings which have survived the utterance; and there were women, too, who, fascinated alike by their grace of manner and brilliant repartee—happy mortals—nay, immortals!—never at a loss for words of wisdom or wit. What, for instance, in these degenerate days can match Tallyrand's and La Rochefoucauld's inimitable apothegms? "The English have fifty religions and only one sauce." "We have all of us sufficient fortitude to bear the misfortunes of others," and so forth. France was pre-eminent in the art of conversation a century or more ago, and it may be said without exaggeration of the salons of the day, where Mme. de Stäel, Mme. Récamier and others held their court, that to visit them was a liberal education. With most of these brilliant conversationalists we are fairly well acquainted through the medium of letters, biographies, memoirs, etc., but the wit of the great Ab'l é-diplomatist comes down to us through other channels than his own, for the *Memoirs* that he wrote have never yet been published; why, it is somewhat difficult to say.

If dulness is the only annihilator of literature, it should be equally true to say that it is an infallible extinguisher to conversation. The attic salt of wit is absolutely necessary to brighten and add a piquancy to the more solid materials of reason's feast. When the great doctor rolled forth his polysyllabic wisdom, a certain heavy pungency of humour occasionally displayed itself, as in the memorable diatribe against a woman lecturer—it reminded him of a dog walking on its hind legs; it was never done well, but the wonder was that it was done at all. Too much stress, indeed, can scarcely be laid upon the importance of wit as a desirable element conversationally; not necessarily that wit which is exercised at the expense of others, and which would sacrifice a bosom friend on the altar of repartee—but rather the spark which kindles an answering flash from others, and illuminates mediocrity as an incandescent burner brightens up a suburban back parlour. A past-master in this art

was the famous editor of the Edinburgh Review, Sydney Smith, whose brilliant table-talk has been handed down to us by numerous admirers. He was a universal favourite in society, where his epigrams were always received with delight, for although never censorious, he could on occasion be stinging, as in the case of his remark upon Hallam at table "with his mouth full of cabbage and contradiction." When we remember that the society of his day comprised the most brilliant conversationalists in the early part of the century, we can form some idea of the mental pabulum that formed the table-talk of the time, and of which we have delightful examples in Hazlitt, Lamb, Southey, and their contemporaries.

Do we ever hear of table-talk nowadays? Alas, no,—the art is lost. People meet to eat, not to converse, and a desultory dropping fire of remarks is all one meets with or expects. It is not good form to talk, a man or woman guilty of such a solecism, is looked upon as conceited or vulgar, and to be vulgar is a worse offence than to be wicked in society's eyes,—either they wish to show off their superior wit and wisdom, or they are ignorant of the rules of modern good breeding, which cultivates a solemn silence and spiritless indifference towards these things which furnished forth their grandparents' feasts of reason so richly with much kaleidoscopic talk. There is nothing new and there is nothing true, and what is the use of exciting oneself over such a played-out comedy as this life? The Epicurean motto "Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow you die," applied well enough to the old régime, for they did not disdain the quips and cranks, the pleasant jest, the hearty laugh that helped digestion and enlivened their more ponderous meetings, but we, their degenerate descendants!—well, mutes at a funeral could scarcely be more sad and subdued than many of the frequenters of modern society gatherings.

The one man who knew his kind thoroughly—Shakespeare—says, "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players," and in some respects, it would be infinitely better for us if we were all more alive to this truth. An actor must necessarily put some interest and sympathy into his work. When he speaks he makes us feel—unless, indeed, he is a mere mouthpiece—that *he is* the man he represents, and that his passions, sorrows, and joys are real. His art emphatically asserts that "feeling should descend from the mind to the heart, that which is *light* may become *heat*."

The best conversationalists, and the pleasantest companions are those men and women who, like good actors, are in quick and sympathetic touch with their company. From grave to gay, from lively to severe, they will range with you, playing many parts, and all well, so that afterwards one recalls their varied talk with unmixed pleasures,—unaware, probably, that the secret of this pleasant intercourse lay altogether in our companion's versatility and willingness to talk upon those subjects that pleased us rather than on those which commended themselves to him. Undoubtedly the secret of successful conversation depends on adaptability. Between persons of opposite and decided views it is rarely satisfactory, for there is always friction, and a real interchange of ideas is impossible. One becomes conscious of a gathering cloud, and the warm atmosphere of cordial confidence grows cold enough to wither in the bud any further expression of feeling on the unlucky subject.

After all, it is better to have a sturdy opinion on really important questions than a weakly inclination only that may be uprooted or disturbed by any sturdy opposing force. But such an opinion should never be allowed to intrude itself unpleasantly in our social relations. Putting aside the inevitable differences of opinion to which we expose ourselves, it is also in bad taste, for it is as true that speech is given to us to conceal our thoughts as that it is also the channel of revealing them. We may be sure—indeed we know—that the brilliant talkers whose glory has departed with them, were never guilty of such impropriety, always excepted the great doctor himself, whose dogmatisms were indulgently listened to by an audience who venerated rather than criticised. We can, indeed, imagine poor Goldsmith chafing sometimes, while his domineering friend laid down the law, but Johnson had been his benefactor, and the warm-hearted Irishman remembered and endured.

The distinction between conversation and talk is very obvious. The one allows each an innings and a fair field; the other is a desultory scramble over every conceivable topic, with an equal amount of attention bestowed on a bonnet as on a battle. The one is dignified, courteous, intellectual. The other, hasty, slipshod, and commonplace. Of course I am aware of the objections that may be made to a revival of the art of talking. Conditions of life are so changed that all our habits must accommodate themselves to the new order of things. Leisure is limited, and cannot be spent in the

cultivation of that beautiful Gladstonian attribute "verbosity." What we have to say must be said briefly and to the point,—and in so far as mere information is concerned, brevity is certainly the soul of wit,—also in the multiplicity of demands upon one's leisure, mere talking for the sake of conversation is a waste of time. So it may seem superficially, but to those who look beneath the surface it is not so. They see the sad and inevitable deterioration of language, the adoption of a maimed and unattractive form of speech, the glory of Elizabethan and Shakesperian English, fallen from its high estate and supplanted by vulgar slang and the bastard cosmopolitanisms that represent his native tongue to a modern Englishman. Who among us, taking thought in the matter, but would weep at the prospect of the language that Shakespeare immortalized, and Milton glorified, becoming as extinct as that of ancient Egypt? And yet we run this risk daily in neglecting to cultivate the graces and amenities of conversation—an art, it should be remembered, that demands all the resources of language for its proper employment—and on which are dependent as a natural corollary, the dignity and purity of our literature.

Yes, we have fallen into a parlous state indeed, if the pleasant and healthful habit of conversation is to degenerate into mere gossip or monosyllabic exchange of opinion. The grave-digger in "Hamlet" asserts that the English are all mad,—better mad than sad perhaps, for that is what we are come to. We still like to be amused, but we are incapable of amusing ourselves, the facilities offered of doing the business for us being so numerous and accessible. In some respects, too, we still like to talk, but our mental grasp of a subject is atrophied, all our information being provided for us in accurate cut and dried form by myriad newspapers and magazines, so that no thinking is necessary. Facts are very good servants, but they are domineering masters, and they effectually strangle conversational effort. When Smith meets Brown at lunch he may, for instance, wax eloquent on the Indian question, and if Brown meets him on the same ground a cheerful and friendly conversation may result. But Brown is primed with facts and figures fresh from his morning paper, and fires them off like the enemies' rifle bullets, straight at poor Smith's innocent little suppositions and opinions, till the latter collapses entirely in the face of such tremendous odds.

No, let all enthusiasts in the revival of the old-fashioned art of

pleasing speech zealously set their faces against facts as such, using them indeed, but sparingly, and covering their naked unattractiveness with such a skilfully woven veil of language, and hiding their obtrusive angles with such many coloured flowers of speech, that instead of terrifying they will charm us, and it may be, the day will once more dawn, when conversation will no more be looked upon as a forgotten art, but as a living and intellectual representation of a nation's language.

Damocles, or the Gates of Janus.

By THEODORA CORRIE.

Author of "IN SCORN OF CONSEQUENCE," "PETRONELLA DARCY,"
"ONLY THE AYAH," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XIII. (*continued.*)

PATRICK came every day to see May, and Ted always appeared in his company. The two girls must go to this or that croquet party, or ride, or drive, on those excursions so dear to Evelyn's heart. Mrs. Godwin could seldom be persuaded to lend her presence to any form of entertainment in the daytime. During the last ten years, her natural indolence had gradually increased, till, as May prophesied, gaiety by daylight presented itself less as a pleasure than as a wearisome form of exertion. Evelyn was, however, always amiably willing to chaperone both girls; and what with riding, driving, croquet and millinery, the days went by all too quickly. Mrs. Godwin complained more than once, with some truth, that the whole routine of the household had to be changed to suit May's convenience.

Into all these gaieties, Paul refused to be drawn. Possessed by a writing fever, he spent most of his time shut up in the attic, or else went out in the early morning, in a light canoe on the river. Another month's work would see the completion of his first book. Ideas came to him best under the clear sky, and stamped themselves on his memory, to be written down afterwards as if from recollection. The

dipping sculls, the motion of the boat, the very reflections in the water chimed in with his thoughts, and he drank in impressions afresh at every bend of the river. Some people might have fancied that he was lost to his surroundings, but even when he was at work in the attic, the scent of the larches, through the open back window, floating up on the sunshine, the sound of the river across the grass, the call of the wild duck and moor-hens, the very fluttering of the wings of alighting swallows under the eaves, or their passing shadow on the blind; all these things came to him, and fashioned as in a golden mist his spirit's work-frame; in the midst of which his thoughts moved to and fro, weaving through a floating web the thread of inspiration.

Once admit the presence of other people, and dreams become impossible to some natures. So it was with Paul, and Henrietta realised this truth if no one else did. She always dusted the books and arranged the attic before he came into it in the morning. The room would have looked forlorn enough if she had not set it straight: while the fresh buttonhole always laid on his blotting book, furnished a greeting which he could ill have dispensed with.

The two generally sat silent while they were together; the girl contentedly curled up reading in the window seat, while her cousin performed the more mechanical portion of his work. Of his monthly articles for the French periodical she often made fair copy, but of the new play, now nearly completed, she had never read a line. When the manuscript was finished, he had promised to read it aloud to her. This promise, given three years ago, always stood in the girl's mind as the starting point to some unknown goal. She could never bring herself to look beyond it without raising the old haunting dread of a possible separation in the future.

After Mrs. Godwin's heated room, a magnetic quiet reigned in the whole atmosphere of the attic, which drew Henrietta to it, and laid a spell upon her sensitive and finely strung nature. The oaken doorway stood as the turnstile to the fairyland of her childhood—a fairyland of bookshelves, where lived the pictured green-robed Dryad beckoning her on to a world of quiet delight. The old asylum had never lost its charm, and she could always take refuge here from the babble of talk in the drawing-room, from Patrick Strafford's stream of jokes, and loud good-natured laughter.

May had climbed the stairs once, but declared the place to be a

great wilderness of a room, with books enough in it for a whole college, and sufficient litter to fill half a dozen wastepaper baskets. Paul felt as if a French fashion-plate had suddenly invaded his sanctum, and much to his secret relief, she never came again.

Where Henrietta was concerned, matters stood on a very different footing. Though she kept the attic in order, the papers on his table were never meddled with, and in her own person she might have sat for a model for Herrick's lines. A certain "wild civility" could have been traced in more than her "shoe-tie." Paul's chair would have lacked something if she had not found hanging from its carved back, the little old silk hood worn on her early garden expeditions, or the white silk handkerchief tied round her neck every morning by Sophie, which, more often than not, found its way first to Paul's table, and then to his pocket, en route for a fresh presentation to its owner. The girl never guessed that nowadays every minute of her presence was noted by her cousin in the same fashion as a miser counts a hoard which he sees steadily diminishing. All the joy and the pain in his life centred on the tap that came so unfailingly every afternoon on the door-panels. For the touch of those light fingers through the coming years, the listener knew only too well he might wait all in vain.

Meanwhile, Henrietta treated him exactly as she would have treated a very dear brother. The little Princess of old days still kept some of her imperious ways, and often ordered her former play-fellow out of doors, with a determination which refused to be baffled. "If you don't do anything else," she used to say, "go and play cricket:" and this injunction he generally obeyed, with surprising docility.

CHAPTER XIV.

As we have said once before, in former days John Godwin had been a keen cricketer. His enthusiasm now spent itself upon the promotion of the game among his poorer neighbours, or rather upon a continuance of their interest in it. In his father's lifetime a generous portion of an eight acre field had been turned into a cricket ground: and here, by permission, the villagers still came to regular practices. Prevented from ever holding a bat again by the loss of his right arm,

Godwin was still a capital left-handed bowler, and to the Godwinites he proved himself at times an excellent coach. On fine summer evenings the well rolled pitch furnished unfailing attraction to the village blacksmith, the carpenter, the farrier and such worthies: and to any of the young ploughmen who were not too tired after their day's work to put in an appearance.

On these occasions Bellissima often trotted into the field, impressed apparently with a desire to keep order, and old Jeremiah generally followed the dog.

In the cricket shed, his yarns, particularly the description of the battle in which the master lost his arm, and Garibaldi was unhorsed, always elicited a murmur of genuine approval.

On ordinary evenings Godwin left the players to themselves: but once a fortnight, a flag flying from an old staff, announced to the initiated that the Squire was in the field; and the men came up for what they called a "tussle practice": the said tussel being accompanied by unlimited cans of tea, and buns prepared by the village baker. Buns of a yellow brown colour, large, wonderfully puffy, dull surfaced and sticky: served in a clothes basket, covered and lined with a white tablecloth, to keep off intruding flies. No such buns are to be seen nowadays, any more than the almug trees, and spices of famous memory which came long ago to King Solomon.

The fortnightly practices all tended to one culminating point of interest; a yearly cricket match, always played between the Godwin's Rest and the Godwin's Chase villagers.

Out of consideration for the farmers, the match played in fine summer weather could only be a half-day affair, single innings a side. The men being allowed by special request to knock off work at mid-day, they were always in the field by one o'clock, and stumps were never drawn till half-past seven in the evening.

Excitement ran higher than the score, and by nightfall everyone could generally boast of an innings and an appetite.

From start to finish the match was regarded as a most delightful form of entertainment. The small boys came to watch their fathers, and went home to practice with stumps made out of willow wands, and balls of curious consistency: the wives, who could shut up their cottages, went to watch their husbands and sons. Altogether, as the old clerk used to remark: "He'd never seen anything to

ekal it, man and boy: nor the Squire's way of carving roast beef afterwards neither, God bless him;" a sentiment heartily endorsed by Jeremiah.

Forty years ago, down in the country, the women all dropped curtsies, and the men wore smock frocks: and in some out-of-the-way parishes, the one radical member of the community found himself treated as a harmless lunatic, a fit subject for the village wit, or at any rate for amused commiseration. Modern civilisation which has cleared out so many dark corners, has nevertheless inevitably swept away on its tide a great deal of that poetry of life to which recollection still clings.

Looking from the past to the present state of the country parishes, one can trace so great an increase of morality and self-respect among one's poorer brethren, that carping criticism would be sorely out of place: yet, all the same, memory turns fondly to the old days when the haymakers worked on till midnight, as a matter of course, under the June stars; holding a lantern if need be, to the gatepost while the great waggons passed through with their load: the men loth, one and all, to leave good grass for a chance of a change in the weather.

In those days, far from bringing their own food to the Rector's glebe land, or elsewhere, the farming hands were always fed by their employer. Where are the generous fruit tarts, made and sent out in milkpans? the pails of savoury Irish stew, smoking hot, and thick with good vegetables: and the cans of home brewed ale that quenched thirst instead of provoking it? Where is the universal smock frock lamented still by the old labourers, as the one garment that turned the wet, and kept a man's chest warm despite the dirtiest weather? Where is the olden time great lady, the dear old Duchess, who manufactured with a dainty set of tools her own daintier shoes for the yearly county ball: who carved roast beef in a great holland apron at the dinners and suppers to the tenantry; who always started the village dance on May day round her own time-honoured thorn tree in the home park: and regularly examined the children in her parish schools?

All these things, and the people who made them have vanished during the march of the last forty years. The old order has changed, giving place to the new one: and though some of the matrons still drop a curtesy, in return for a handshake, without any thought of

servility, the younger generation, civil enough, will never learn to bow their knees. And the white smock, with its quaint old world needlework, can only be seen at funerals, on the pall bearers and at church afterwards for a Sunday or two. The last relic of ancient garments has taken sanctuary, like many better things before it; but for how long this refuge will avail it is hard to say. In the meantime my digression has led me far enough away from my starting point—the annual cricket match at Godwin's Worthy.

With the goodwill of the reader, I will take up the thread of events, in company with Jeremiah, who, when the all important day came, declared that it could not have dawned more auspiciously.

"Round-away Hill," an eminence in the far distance, had been veiled in mist for some hours after sunrise; and to the appearance of this stretch of down, culminating in a green barrow, Jeremiah always pinned his opinion of the weather. On uncertain days the hill always appeared to have made a march forwards, being clearly visible: but on fine settled mornings it was only hazily in sight, and looked as if it had beaten a retreat.

Jeremiah asserted that the place was well named, and that it had been called "Round-away Hill," because, as he informed the village youth, it was here that the ancient Britons had "runned away," when Oliver Cromwell beat William the Conqueror during the thirteenth century. This assertion made in perfect good faith, was never questioned by anyone. Jeremiah prided himself on being a bit of a historian, and a weather prophet into the bargain.

He was the only man in the village who had fought through a real battle, and had done some killing of foreigners and Frenchies on his own account. True, Ragget the village radical, who lived on a pension of his own, boasted of active participation in the battle of the Nile: but this piece of information never failed to produce a guffaw. It had long leaked out, that the sole position he had occupied during the engagement was that of stoker. Except as a butt, Ragget met with small attention: while on all important occasions Jeremiah and Wallis, the postman, divided the honours of the little community between them.

On this particular summer morning the two men had been busily working together, sticking miniature flags on the boundary, giving the roller one last pull, and helping the Squire and Henrietta with final arrangements. The ground was in excellent condition, the

tiny flags fluttered gaily in the breeze, and shortly before one o'clock the village appeared in the field : players and spectators alike determined to make the most of their time.

The interests of both sides were fairly represented by the members of the Godwin household, and by a large contingent from the Chase. Wet or fine, Evelyn drove over early : Ted, debarred from playing, always kept score ; while John performed the same office for Godwin's Rest. Evelyn and Henrietta kept a duplicate record ' just for the pleasure of it,' and were very seldom caught tripping. They took as much interest in the match as the players themselves did ; and great was the amicable rivalry displayed between the two households and their respective teams.

An old black shed put up long ago at the top of the field remained sacred to the players and some of their friends. A low wooden pavilion, a little to the right of it, served as a grand stand for the "Quality," so styled by Jeremiah : while the rest of the onlookers, the village youth and the smaller fry, disported themselves on the grass. On these days unlimited tea in large cans circulated from three o'clock, accompanied by the monster bun before mentioned : and the proceedings always terminated in a supper served in the Godwin's Rest coachhouse.

When living at the Chase with her brother (old John Godwin, then the young Lord of the Manor), the Duchess had shown a keen interest in many cricket matches : before people whispered, that Mr. Godwin had taken to his wilder ways, and had half broken her heart. Now perhaps from some lingering memory she still supported the old traditions : and though in visibly declining health, no one doubted that she would not fail to appear on the ground to witness the finish of the match. One particular seat in the old wooden pavilion being reserved for her special use.

When we said that the Godwin family was represented, we must make one exception to this statement. Mrs. Godwin seldom came to the field till late in the afternoon. She disliked the glare out of doors, and never could enter into the general excitement, or see the good of all the "fuss." On this particular day she stayed tranquilly in her room till three o'clock, when the door opened and May walked in.

"It's quite too hot for anything, mamma ; they have been at it for two hours," she said. "Godwin's Rest won the toss and went in

first, and Patrick is standing mid-off. He won't be batting till tea time, if then : there is no good in my sitting out there to be grilled. Henrietta is a perfect Salamander : she is quite absorbed. I couldn't get her to move."

"Who is looking after her?"

"Cousin Evelyn, and Ted, and Miss Swann," said May, with a meaning smile. "Miss Swann has bought a piece of magenta worsted work, which makes one inclined to squint. Miss Lavender is too poorly to come. She is failing very fast, it seems to me. Miss Swann says that she has not the strength to walk round the garden this summer. Poor thing, she sent me a special message, and wants me to go to tea there to-morrow. It is rather a nuisance, but she seems to take it for granted that I am coming. You know I have put it off several times, and Cousin Evelyn was listening : and one must be polite : though it is rather a bore to have to be out on my last spare afternoon. I really have been meaning to visit Miss Lavender every day this last fortnight, but there has been so much to do. Miss Swann says that they have a little present for me. And while I think of it, mamma, I had something rather nice given me this afternoon by Aunt Catherine."

"Your aunt is not there already?" said her mother incredulously.

"She did not get out of the carriage : she came to pick up Miss Swann, mamma. She is going first of all to see Miss Lavender, and to have tea at the Nutshell."

The expression of astonishment on Mrs. Godwin's face deepened. "Fancy Miss Swann giving a tea-party."

"I think Aunt Catherine offered herself a week ago from what Miss Swann said, mamma."

Mrs Godwin looked offended ; it had not occurred to her that her aunt would drive over before five o'clock : and it was not pleasant to find the Nutshell preferred to Godwin's Rest.

"Aunt Catherine's present is not a bad one," May went on : "It is a cheque for a thousand pounds. She told me not to thank her for it, as it was all that I should see of her money. That was so like Aunt Catherine ; but she was very nice about it all the same : much less sphinx-like than usual. She does look most dreadfully ill, mamma, not a bit fit to be driving about. The thousand will be very useful. I wish that I had had it before I went to get my trousseau. Any-way I can give you back that hundred pounds now. Oh, yes, I

thought of that directly," cutting short her mother's remonstrance. "You wouldn't see a penny of it if I were going to be a poor woman. But Patrick told me yesterday that his uncle will increase his income directly we are married, and I am to have two thousand a year for pin money. You know Sir Patrick is enormously rich. I mean to be properly presented next spring, and to have Henrietta up to stay with me. I shall be the best dressed woman in London," May ended, with a little emphatic nod of her yellow head. "Mamma," mischief deepening in her eyes, "do you know when the first man went in to-day what Ted nearly entered on the scoring sheet?"

"No, what, May?"

"Instead of Henry Elton he began putting down Henrietta, I was looking over him, but he didn't notice me. Patrick has found a new name for me lately. He calls me Mrs. Bryant and May's patent safety match maker. Its too bad of him: but somehow I can never see two people together without building castles. To go no farther than Uncle John, it always astonishes me that he can't persuade cousin Evelyn to marry him."

Her mother looked startled. "He has too much pride to be a mere suitor for money. There could be no love about it; Evelyn must know that."

"Why not?" said May, coldly. "I have always thought that there might be a good deal."

"You young people see the reflection of yourselves in everything," said Mrs. Godwin, "but I fancy your uncle was too much in love with Marguerite ever to care about anyone else."

"My cousin Marguerite," said May. "Let me see; she died before I was born. But seriously, mamma, was Uncle John ever really in love with her?"

"Your uncle was always at the Grange that summer," said Mrs. Godwin, "till the crash came, and then he seemed to lose his head altogether, after the night of that ball."

May settled herself comfortably, leaning her head back against the cushions of her mother's sofa. Her curiosity roused already by Henrietta's remark about the brier roses, could more probably be satisfied by her mother than by anyone else.

"Tell me all about it, mamma," she said, coaxingly; "I so seldom get you to myself for a good talk"

"Whose fault is that, May?" said Mrs. Godwin, in a voice, half-reproachful, half-caressing. "I hardly know what makes me think of the old time to-day. I never do when I can avoid it, the contrast is too sharp; still, the night that your great-aunt gave that ball is one not easily to be forgotten. Your grandfather complained of feeling poorly after dinner, and made a point of your uncle staying with him, which was very provoking. However, I found out afterwards that he was very much upset about some money matters; and he had a stroke that night from which he never really rallied, though he lingered a fortnight, and could never bear John out of his sight; and then nearly everything was sold, as you know, and we went abroad."

"But about Uncle John and my cousin," said May. It was almost impossible to start Mrs. Godwin on any subject, without her branching away from it.

"The night of the ball, May, just as I was starting, your uncle came to me with a note and a lovely bouquet of brier roses. He asked me to see that Marguerite had them, and to explain about your grandfather to Aunt Catherine. When I arrived, I found that Marguerite was not very well. She suffered from her heart, and she had an attack of palpitation, and was not allowed to come downstairs that evening. I asked for her, and they took me to her room, and that was the last I ever saw of her, poor child. She always looked such a baby, though she was just seventeen. It was very pretty to see her with the flowers; she seemed quite comfortable then, and no one felt alarmed about her. I could see that the note wouldn't be opened while I was there, so I went downstairs. After dinner I heard that Evelyn had accepted General Thorne. They were in the conservatory for ever so long together. Everyone was congratulating her, and I told John the news, when I got home, but he was too much taken up with your grandfather, who was much worse; and I had a miserable, gloomy time of it altogether. Within a few hours the news came that Marguerite had died from failure of the heart's action; died in her sleep, poor girl. It was all most depressing, as you can imagine, May. Your uncle shut up in your grandfather's room for a fortnight; and then the rush off abroad, while the agent arranged the sale for your uncle. He refused to stay a day in the place after the funeral. And your father was quite overwhelmed and gave in to everything. We were all hustled off before I had time to breathe. But I knew very well that John's

marriage with Claire de Follet was no love match. He has never cared for anyone but poor little Marguerite, and he never will; of that I am quite sure."

This conviction, a source in itself of infinite satisfaction and security, during the last twenty years, was one not likely to be abandoned. But May's words for the second time within a few weeks introduced a possible disarrangement of existing circumstances. Though heartily disliking Evelyn, Mrs. Godwin, in her secret heart, looked upon her as a "white witch," capable of throwing spells at will over most people.

"Uncle John is an enigma to me," said May. "Perhaps he has met with a rebuff. Cousin Evelyn looks very well able to look after herself. All the same it is a pity. If he would only migrate to the Chase, this place would make a very suitable dower house for you, with a suitable income to keep things going, if you really wished to remain here. Now don't begin to shake your head at me, mamma. It amuses me to make plans, and it doesn't hurt anybody."

May looked very pretty this afternoon. There was something about her that can only be described by the word vivid. She was fond of very bright colours, particularly of scarlet. In her red silk blouse, and coquettish straw hat, with a great bunch of poppies in it; and the same flowers patterned in wreaths on her white skirt, she looked like the herald of coming corn fields; while the fairness of her skin, and the masses of her yellow hair defied criticism. She sat still for a few minutes longer, meditatively swinging one foot to and fro, then said:

"Henrietta has promised to come for me when the other side go in; by that time the detachment from the Grange ought to be here. I know that M. de Brie is coming over; he has promised to bring Hetty a French book, and he wants to take a lesson in the mysteries of cricket. I like your cousin, mamma, he is a very handsome old man."

"He is not particularly old," said Mrs. Godwin, with a sudden access of irritation in her voice, for which she could not have given an account.

"Isn't he?" said May, carelessly. Her eyes were cast down, and her mother failed to perceive the expression that had suddenly come into them. "I don't know how old he may be, mamma, in reality, but he is one of those delightful people who never bore one. Henri-

etta and I both admire him immensely. He makes one think of the most interesting part of a novel—the last volume—and that reminds me that I am keeping you from finishing your book. I see you are in the third volume, so let me have the two first. I shall follow your good example and rest for an hour.” Getting up now, and kissing her mother lightly on either cheek, she strolled to the window, and sitting down in an armchair, became speedily buried in the joys and sorrows of an imaginary heroine.

Her mother heaved a sigh, that told of a good deal of mental perplexity. Her own mind, like her boudoir, was shaded off into artistically blended half tones, where no single colour, or motive could be detached from its surroundings.

I hoped that Aunt Catherine would have remembered May more substantially, she thought; however, the money will come in very usefully. There is no need to tell John that the trousseau has cost me nothing. He is stingy enough as it is, he has only offered to pay for the wedding dress. If Aunt Catherine had any proper feeling, she would have made him a proper allowance long ago. The duke left her very well off; she must be immensely rich, independently of the Godwin money. John wants help badly enough, to judge by the economy that he tries to make me practice. But men always exaggerate, and a few debts won't make any difference to him later on. With a prospective income of twenty-thousand a year, he could easily raise money if he could chose to do so; with which reflection, Mrs. Godwin returned to the perusal of her book.

She was always polite to her aunt; but the duchess had never liked this niece by marriage. A natural antagonism existed between them, veiled by the younger woman by motives of expediency, but plainly visible in the unvarying coldness of the other's manner.

On the afternoon of the cricket match Mrs. Godwin's third volume of a novel proved unusually interesting. Four o'clock had struck before Henrietta re-appeared, the colour coming and going in her cheeks, and her dark eyes sparkling with excitement.

“Our side are all out,” she announced. “Oh, mamma, you should have been there. Paul has played splendidly: he made thirty runs, just half the score, and carried his bat: and the Chasites will do well if they tie us before the stumps are drawn. Only Captain Strafford is dreadfully active. He had Paul out with a left-handed catch at the boundary. Uncle John says that he has

never seen anything prettier since Currie's catch at Lord's years ago. All the same it is detestable. I feel as if you had imported a cask of dynamite amongst us, May. He ought to be labelled dangerous."

Mrs. Godwin looked up from the interrupted reading to the girl's merry face.

"My dear, you seem quite excited."

"I am excited," said Henrietta gleefully. "And I expect to feel even more so by the end of the day. It is delightful to see Uncle John; I often wish we could do more in the village. He is my beau ideal of a squire: only he reminds me of Pegasus in pound, now-a-days," she added half to herself.

"Excitement is very becoming," said May critically, "but you had better try to calm down, my dear child, or you will be quite used up before the match is over. Tell me, shall I wear this hat, or my scarlet silk Tam; I can't quite make up my mind?"

"The hat is very pretty, May, and it is the shadiest."

"Yes, I know that, but I think the Tam is more becoming than the hat. I could use my red parasol too, and it casts such a delightful coppery glow on the face of anyone who happens to be sitting next one. Lady Marianne St. John is coming over this afternoon, and I don't like her. Yes, I think I shall wear my Tam, but I want you to keep just as you are, Rietta."

"I did think of wearing my other hat," said Henrietta reflectively. "This is only my gardening one: but it is as good as a parasol, so nice and big and shady, and so convenient for scoring in."

"You couldn't have anything prettier, don't change it," said May decidedly. The hat in question, a limp white straw, of that kind which can be bought for a shilling, might not have suited anybody: but it lay on Henrietta's hair like a delicately curled leaf, and no better frame could have been found for the face that looked like a flower beneath it. Mrs. Godwin saw the girls off, and then returned to her book and her afternoon sleep.

The shadows were lengthening—she had forgotten all about the match, when hasty footsteps were heard outside, and Henrietta came running in, eagerness in every line of her face.

"Oh, mamma," she cried, out of breath, but radiant, "you must come out, I wouldn't have you miss the finish for anything. The

Chasites have put up forty-five. It is past seven o'clock: the light isn't very good, and they have just twenty minutes left to make fifteen runs. Captain Strafford is out, which is a comfort, and Dover and Greg are batting: but they are both dreadfully good: and there is one other man left to go in, one of the grooms. Mamma, we haven't had such a match for years."

Fortunately Mrs. Godwin had just finished her book: and as Henrietta stood by the sofa, her fair face lit up with excitement, there was something infectious in her manner, in the sweet eagerness that had made her leave the field to fetch her mother, without whom even this day's pleasure could not be perfect. With more alacrity than she usually displayed Mrs. Godwin rose to accompany her daughter. The visitors from the Grange had arrived some time ago, and it is always pleasant to find that one has been missed. She would probably sit looking in any direction but the crease, though if the rest of the world chose to honour the match she did not intend to be absent. The pavillion was well filled, but a chair had been carefully kept for her in a comfortable corner: and her own late arrival created a stir of some importance, so she flattered herself. The Duchess had come back from the Nutshell, bringing Miss Swann, and had been joined by Marianne, M. de Brie, and the other men who were staying at the Grange.

M. Réport seemed inclined to haunt Henrietta, and his example was so well followed that the girl in desperation begged to be left in peace, as she could not keep score and talk at the same time. Wrapped up in the game, she gave only a divided attention to other matters: while May, in her scarlet cap and blouse, had a word and a smile for everybody, and formed a little centre of counter attraction. Brought to the ground much against his will, the Duke leant over the back of his sister's chair, vainly endeavouring to make her talk: his well meant efforts only met with a request for silence.

"One might imagine that the fate of the nation hung on this particular match," he grumbled. "Cricket isn't a lady's game, and what's the use of your keeping score, Evelyn? John and Ted can be trusted to do that, and two of the men are at it as well."

"If you can't feel an interest at this juncture, I wish you would feign one," said Evelyn impatiently. "There! I thought as much: that drive of Dover's is good for four. We have just ten minutes left, and only one man to go in: Here, Sol, take my pencil. I suppose

you are capable of scoring one run, if we can only get it : but I can't sit still any longer."

He took her chair with a smile, and surveyed the scene before him with more interest than he had so far displayed. He was no cricketer, but the whole field at the minute furnished him with a study which lingered long in his memory. The most ignorant eyes might have discerned by this time, that a crisis in the day's interest was rapidly approaching. Even Jeremiah's tame jackdaw, perched at a safe distance from juvenile villagers on the top of the roller, held its head on one side with a knowing air : and Bellissima, crouched at Henrietta's feet, watched Paul's bowling with eyes that were almost human in their intelligence. The old umpire, standing in an ancient tall hat, brushed shiny and threadbare, and a frock coat buttoned to bursting, remarked audibly that it was the most rousing kind of a game that had been played on the ground for twenty years. He didn't know if he'd ever seen such another since he'd first been "empire." It was as pretty a team as he had ever set eyes on ; a very pretty team, only the Chase looked terrible like winning.

Certainly the Chase did look very like winning. The two men who were in, were the flower of the eleven, Captain Strafford excepted. Everyone owned that 'Patty' had done wonders, and had stood up to Paul's bowling in a manner that elicited approving nods from friends, and foes alike : for the villagers were fair minded, and Paul was acknowledged to be the best cricketer in the neighbourhood.

The village blacksmith, now at the wicket (once a young Hercules, but at the present time an elderly one, fast growing grey and stout) possessed arms of iron, it is true : and his score generally mounted up by twos and threes so long as he stayed in : but he never could learn the meaning of the word caution, and was given to swiping. Fortune often favoured him, though he went by the nick name of L. B. W., and was always given out for this offence. Possibly on this memorable occasion the man opposite him was the most reliable player in the whole field—the manager of Evelyn's home farm—a little wiry hay-coloured man, with a hay-coloured crop of scanty hair, and tiny blue twinkling eyes—a man all but stone deaf, but with an air of alertness only to be matched by the general wiriness of a little fox terrier, which had come to the field with the team, and now sat with both ears cocked, waiting for the

only really interesting part of the day in its own estimation—the return of its master to the cricket shed. If Greg made a good score the dog by some intuition would run barking to meet him : but if he came back disconsolate Jock stayed in the shed to lick the hand that held the bat.

The display of cotton, and bandana handkerchiefs, now busily mopping many a heated brow, could hardly have been bettered in the United Kingdom, and the quantity of ginger-beer, and tea and buns already consumed was as Jeremiah said ‘mazerling.’ The youngest groom from the Chase, sat in the cricked shed, watching the course of events with bated breath. He was nervous : he had never played in the annual match before, and he hoped it would be won without his being called upon to bat. His hopes so far seemed to be in a fair way towards justification.

Dover, the smith, had his eye all there, as one man remarked. Alf White (the son of the village baker and plumber), an urchin of some ten years of age, and an ardent Godwinite, gave his small body an anguished wriggle at this assertion, and relieved his feelings by standing head downwards, for the nineteenth time that day.

“’Tother chap don’t look likely,” said the village carpenter, “but he’s a good one to go, is little Greg. No more colour about him than an old paling, but he sticks to his wicket : he supplies the glue, he does. He’ll stay in so long as his breath lasts.”

This was true : Greg suffered badly sometimes from his heart, but he never could resist the subtle fascination of a match ; and Mrs. Greg generally looked on with a divided mind ; terror of possible consequences, and wifely pride and admiration, alternately weighing down the scale of her feelings. “Cricket” was all very well, but they would be the death of him some day, she knew that : and that little ‘op to leg, which Greg delighted to hit for four, was as good as a nail in his coffin. She only hoped Providence wouldn’t let her live to see him carried off the ground : but she couldn’t keep away, “not if it were ever so.” When the score mounted to fifty-nine the good woman felt with Lady Evelyn that she could sit still no longer. John and Henrietta sharing the same bench, sat with eyes glued to the bowler.

“I wouldn’t answer for their chances even yet,” said John under his breath.

Henrietta caught the whisper and squeezed the hand that lay near

her own. "Paul means to get his wicket without giving him a chance at a loose ball," she said with conviction.

If Paul meant mischief Dover was on his guard. The deliberation of his play had something maddening in it, to the uninitiated. From time immemorial when opportunity served he had always walked round his wicket and carefully scanned the pitch, "squinting" between the bails, first with one eye, then with the other: hitting the block hole on his return with a meditative slowness only atoned for by the vigour with which a drive for the boundary sometimes followed these proceedings.

Why did he walk round the wicket? Because he always had, and always should, and if he didn't he shouldn't hit a ball, he knew that: and there wasn't no rule against it, or he'd have batted his last long ago, and his youngest boy there took after him.

At twenty-five minutes past seven the score still stood at fifty-nine, and then a yell arose from the whole field. Dover was out, leg before wicket.

"I know'd it. Oh yes, I know'd it," he said on reaching the shed, stretching out his legs with a jerk: "Its awkwardish, but Joe there, is good for one run I suppose?"

"Nothing of the sort," said the Captain excitedly—a little dark man, with gipsy blood in his veins, and as keen a cricketer as one could find anywhere, if he had only had more practice—"nothing of the sort. See here, Joe, you go in, and just you don't do nothing at all. You leave Greg to hit: none of your fancy strokes, mind. Just you block. Mr. Paul's dead on the wicket. Don't you go thinking you can hit, Get along sharp, and stand straight when you get there."

The shadows were lengthening, the light growing more uncertain at every minute, when Joe marched nervously from the cricket shed. The terrier watching him go, suddenly lifted its head and howled. The sound was taken as a bad omen by the lookers on. "Keep that dog quiet, can't you," said one of the men. "I feel him all down my legs, and Joe there looks skimpy enough as it is."

Poor Joe, in Hampshire parlance, he certainly did look skimpy. Scarcely more than a boy in years, and a capital field, he had done good service earlier in the day: but his batting was always uncertain. Like the shyest horse in the Chase stables, he possessed nerves, and as he walked from the shed he could see nothing. He

had received much good advice, and had every wish to obey it to the letter. No Curtius before the gulf, or Horatius on the bridge, ever felt animated by greater desperation, or a stronger desire for glory : but, alas for Joe ! the little imp of nervousness had settled on his shoulder. The handle of the bat felt red hot in his fingers, and he grasped it as a drowning man grasps a plank. Oh, why hadn't he gone in earlier in the game, why had he begged the umpire to get the Captain to put him in amongst the tail ? However, he was there, and must abide the consequences, and Ted's cheery "keep up heart, Joe," as he passed the pavillion, still lingered in his ears like a note of encouragement.

The first ball he blocked. The first ball, gentle reader, is always the worst to a nervous cricketer. The second he treated in similar fashion, and the third travelled a short distance without bringing him to grief. Finding himself still in, at the final ball for the first over, Joe drew a long breath of relief and straightened his back : and then, he never quite knew how it happened, but the ball bowled by Paul flew from the off side of the bat, into the claw like hands of short slip, and Godwin's Rest had won the match by one run.

There may be some consolation in the fact that the anguish of one person is often the joy of another : but at this particular moment Joe was beyond consolation. Amid the cheers of the other side, he walked back to the shed, and with his head hanging, listened to the delightfully candid remarks of his juniors (why are juniors always so pitiless, I wonder), inwardly debating whether or no he should resign his situation : feeling that he should never recover from the disgrace of this defeat. And while he sat thus, Alf White was experiencing the most glorious moment of happiness which had so far visited his short life : while for the twentieth time on this ever memorable occasion, his agility, undisturbed by a generous half dozen of sticky buns, he stood upon his curly head, and brought his heels together with a "clack" that said more plainly than words "Victory !" Was he not the baker's son, and had not his father caught out the last man ?

The match was over, the party broke up, the visitors streamed down the meadow towards the coach-house, the stable help feeling a little less like suicide ; for Ted, guessing the state of the case, good-naturedly spoke a word of comfort *en passant*, complimenting the lad on the score of his excellent fielding earlier in the day, and

declaring Paul's bowling to be of a kind before which any man might succumb: winding up by prophesying better luck next year. If the gentleman could speak to him like that, and if there was a chance of his being numbered among the eleven next year: why well, then Joe began to think that life might be more bearable on the whole: and that perhaps he might eat his share of roast beef without choking over it.

The preparations for supper were going forward, as John with his aunt on his arm walked slowly to the entrance gate, and for some minutes stood talking, after putting her into the victoria, while the Curate performed the same office for Lady Evelyn.

"It's no good," said the Duchess, glancing in the direction of the other carriage: "he will get preferment before long, and a good piece of preferment too, he deserves it, but even a fat living will not bring him what he most wants."

"They say that everything comes to him who waits, Aunt Catherine."

"If that is the principle you go upon, I call it a very mistaken one, John. Mahomet went to the mountain, if you remember."

"Unluckily I am not Mahomet," he said in an imperturbable voice.

Then the expression of his face changed to one of sudden concern. He leant forward, and laying his hand on her arm, said gently: "This has been a fatiguing day, you are looking very tired; do you think Cleveland quite understands you?"

"I understand myself," was the answer, "so does Cleveland too, for that matter. No you can't get me anything, I shall be better in a minute or two. I am not going to faint." But John had taken the law into his own hands by this time and was holding brandy and water from his pocket flask to her lips, making of his figure an effectual screen so far as other eyes were concerned.

"You ought not to be out," he said presently, when the pinched drawn look passed from her face, and her breathing became more natural.

"It makes very little difference," she said, "I dislike being in bed, I shall never stay there till I come to the end of it all. My health is an old story by this time. There was something else I wanted to say to you. Have you or Laura retained any shares in that 'Silver Streak' mining company?"

"The dividends are high, but too risky for me," he said "I sold out last month; Laura won't be persuaded; I have said all that I can to her."

"Is Laura as economically inclined as ever, John?"

She spoke in an undertone, and he answered her with a scarcely perceptible bend of the head. Several people were passing the carriage at this minute: Ted at Henrietta's side, and Patrick following with May. They were escorting the girls as far as the garden, and would then return for the dinner, always rather a tremendous business. The Duchess looked meditatively after the retreating figures.

(To be continued.)

The Origin of Servants' Liveries.

By A. J. GORDON.

So far as the present writer is aware, the earliest mention of "liveries" made in history is in the reign of King Pepin of France. This king flourished about the year 750 A.D., and because of his diminutive size, he had bestowed upon him the rather disrespectful appellation of "Pepin the Short."

It would appear that certain of the French courtiers were so ill-mannered, as well as as ill-advised, as to make the monarch's deficiency in inches the subject of ill-natured ridicule. This unbecoming conduct having become known to the King, His Majesty resolved to put an end to such derision of his person by performing some feat which would prove, once and for all, that if deficient in stature, he was not so in manliness. In pursuance of this design, therefore, on the occasion of a public combat between a lion and a bull, when the former animal had succeeded, after a terrible struggle, in pulling the bull to the ground, King Pepin, turning towards those of his nobility who were present, said:

"Which one of you will dare to enter the arena now, and part the combatants, or kill them?"

A dead silence and very perturbed looks were the only reply.

"Then here is the man who will dare it," shouted the little King, springing, as he spoke, into the arena.

With drawn blade he rushed upon the lion and stabbed the fierce brute to the heart, ere it could withdraw its fangs from the neck of the bull in which they were imbedded. Then with one mighty stroke the intrepid monarch almost severed the bull's head from its body. The whole vast audience sat silent and amazed at so unlooked for an exhibition of courage, dexterity and strength combined.

Turning towards his courtiers, the King merely said, in a very quiet tone :

"You should have remembered, that although David was little of stature, yet he laid low the insolent giant who defied Israel."

A less dangerous form of amusement to which King Pepin was partial, was what were termed "*cours plenieres*." These were assemblies at which, upon the King's invitation, all the lords and courtiers of France were expected to be present. They were held twice in each year—at Christmas and Easter—and generally lasted for about a week at each time. Sometimes these gatherings took place at the King's palace ; sometimes in the neighbourhood of one of the larger French cities, and sometimes in some rural district.

In the last named case, care was taken to fix the place of meeting within reasonable distance of one or other of the larger towns, so that those attending the assemblies might find in these towns the needful accommodation for themselves and their attendants. The proceedings always opened with a solemn celebration of the Mass, and ere the service began, the officiating priest was wont, solemnly, to place the Royal crown upon the King's head.

While the festival lasted, the King took all his meals in public : bishops and dukes alone being privileged to sit at the Royal table. A second table was provided for abbots, counts, and other leading men, and at both tables there was shown more profusion than delicacy, both in the quality of the meats and drinks, and the manner in which they were served. Flutes, hautboys, and other musical instruments were played before the bearers of each course, as it was removed from the tables. When dessert was served, twenty heralds, each holding aloft a jewelled goblet, shouted, thrice : "Largesse ! largesse from the most potent of kings !" As they shouted, they scattered among the crowd handfuls of gold and silver coins. Then the

trumpets were blown, while the better-class spectators shouted, and the meaner sort scrambled, and often fought vigorously for the money scattered by the heralds.

Stage-plays, pantomimes, rope-dancing, and the performances of professional buffoons and jugglers constituted the subsequent diversions. Trained dogs, bears and monkeys were also exhibited, and put through their various performances, the whole of these costly shows being provided at the expense of the King. The height of magnificence and extravagance in the matter of these exhibitions was reached in the reign of Charles the Great, when nobles from all parts of the kingdom attended; many of them rivalling the monarch himself in the prodigality of their expenditure.

Charles VII. of France put a final stop to the *cours plénieres*, alleging that the expense attendant upon his wars with England made it impossible for him to continue them. One of the severest causes of expense, it was explained, arose from the fact that, beginning in King Pepin's time, etiquette and custom alike demanded that the King should, upon these occasions, give an entire suit of new and gorgeous clothing, not only to his own servants and retainers, but also to those of the Queen and all the princes of the blood royal. These garments were said to be "*livres*," that is, "delivered" at the King's expense; and from this word the English word "livery" was derived, as was the custom of providing servants with "livery," from the above-mentioned practice of certain of the French Kings.

A Modern Beverage.

"WHEN all things were made," says Salvation Yeo, in Kingsley's immortal "Westward Ho!" "none was made better than this." Unflinching adherence to the tenet of veracious record, compels us to admit that the penegyric was originally penned in praise of tobacco.

The subject of our approval, however, is of a somewhat divergent character, and although of equally universal employment, is, by virtue of its greater value, used with more care. We refer to that cordial of cordials—whisky; and the sentence is incomplete without the additional qualification—Pattisons'.

There are so many kinds, brands and makes of whisky upon the market, that the conscientious recommendation of the especial form of the delicious distillation entails a degree of responsibility, which the *connoisseur* is naturally unwilling to assume. During the last few years, distilling has assumed the important proportions of a fine art, ministered to by all the devices suggested by Science, Invention and general Enterprise.

Perhaps in no single instance is this advancement more marked than in the high-class productions emanating from the well-known firm of Pattisons, Limited, whose Scotch whiskies are sufficiently well known to require no comment here. Suffice it to say that they are admirable in every essential, as they are free from those objectionable qualities which characterize so many other makes before the public.

Men have long ceased to theorise and debate the question of benefit derived from drinking, at regular intervals, small draughts of the spirit in its pure state. There can be no doubt that, employed as a sedative and gentle invigorant, whisky is practically unequalled. Of course a cheap or indifferent preparation is calculated to be as baleful in action as the best is beneficial. There are several very excellent brands in vogue at the moment, all enjoying equal reputation for general excellence, but in common justice it must be said that Pattisons' Scotch whiskies are as near perfection as possible: having a rich, ripe flavour and delicate mellowness peculiarly their own.

Good whisky is to all intents and purposes a very valuable medicine. Its soothing action upon the nerves is well known, and in cases of severe cold, it forms an admirable embrocation if applied judiciously to the throat and chest; though to be sure, a facetious Irishman pointed out that its employment in this connection was somewhat hazardous, by reason of its unavoidable propinquity to the mouth. Pattisons' whisky possesses an undeniable, if indefinable charm. There is a sense of exhilaration in every dram: an exaltation which, in keeping with the refined quality of the spirit, is moderate, mellow and mellifluous.

Whisky is certainly fattening, and numerous instances are recorded in which the spirit has been directly instrumental in producing flesh and weight. The name is originally derived from the Gaelic *uisge*, water; *uisge beath*, modified into *usquebaugh*, or "water of life." A quarter of a century ago, the Scotch preparation was little known in England, but the high standard of merit attained by such firms as Messrs. Pattisons, Limited, has obtained for the spirit manufactured by our neighbours across the heather border, a reputation second to none in the world.

In conclusion it should be added, that whisky is unquestionably the most soothing spirit extant, and it is quite free from those noxious results which attend the consumption of brandy.

It may indeed be questioned whether Kingsley, when he recorded his memorable opinion of tobacco, had not rather Pattisons' whisky in his mind's eye, for it is indeed "a hungry man's food, a sad man's cordial, a wakeful man's sleep, and a chilly man's fire; there is nothing like it under the canopy of Heaven."

LONDON SOCIETY.

DECEMBER, 1897.

“Forbidden.”

By HELEN F. HETHERINGTON,

Part Author of “PAUL NUGENT, MATERIALIST,” “NO COMPROMISE,”
“LED ON,” etc., etc.

CHAPTER XL.

A HARD FIGHT.

ASHFORD VILLA having won the toss, Jack Malet, centre-forward, kicked off for the Athenians, and at once the game began in deadly earnest.

Eager eyes watched every movement, though to the ignorant onlooker, it seemed a perfectly unintelligible muddle, as a series of rushes, charges, tackles and passes began. Hugh Pemberton was to be seen here, there, and everywhere; wherever the ball was, he was sure to be close at hand; and the crowd soon singled him out for their special attention.

Cries of “Well played, Pemberton,” broke out into positive yells of approval, when the Athenians having placed a “corner” nicely in the mouth of the goal, an Ashford Villa forward got away with the ball, and thought he was going to have it all his own way. Hugh charged him like a thunderbolt, stopped him, and with a low hard shot, sent it spinning only one foot outside the post.

Again there was an ugly rush of three Ashford Villa forwards—Forrester went down, Malet missed his kick, and all seemed lost, when Hugh, by a desperate effort, managed to head the ball, and amidst the frantic cries of the spectators contrived to get it away safely. Still the game seemed an even chance—as one member of the crowd remarked, “Nothing in it, one way or the other.” Ashford Villa was very strong in defence. In vain the Athenians made a dangerous attack in front of the goal. Tom Graham was always on

the spot, and "fisted out" again and again, but all his skill would have availed him nothing, if one of his own half-backs had not tripped up Pemberton, just as he was in the act of shooting the ball between the posts.

There were excited cries of "Foul! Foul!" from different quarters of the ground, but the referee saw nothing to complain of, and there was a very pretty bit of play when the Ashford Villa forwards, getting well together, passed the ball with lightning-like rapidity from one to the other, and landed a goal amidst a perfect storm of cheering. Half-time was called when Ashford Villa were one goal to love.

"Football is a failure," Lady Crosby decided at once, when it was explained to her that the "pro's" were getting the best of it. "As to playing it, I would rather try a less violent sort of death. Frozen and disappointed, I am going home."

"The light won't last much longer, you may as well wait till the end," Beatrice remonstrated.

"No, our friends have been defeated," she said sadly. "In the next round, or whatever they call it, they may be crippled or mangled; you might tell me about it this evening, but I should not like to see it done before my eyes. Captain Pemberton's nose is too good a shape to be smashed. Good-bye."

Flo felt a fierce contempt for her as she departed with the Baron in her train. Nothing but the direst necessity would have torn her from her place. She was shivering with the cold, and sitting or standing in the open air on a winter's afternoon was not a position to her taste; but as long as the play went on, she was determined to last out, even at the risk of being reduced to an icicle in the interval.

"I won't stay a moment longer than you wish," Beatrice said, fully conscious of her responsibilities as Flora's hostess.

"You couldn't," she replied, with a little laugh. "I suppose they shut the gates when all is over. What are they doing now?"

"Changing ends," Townshend-Rivers informed her. "They always do it at half-time, and it sometimes changes the luck."

It seemed to do so on this occasion, for the Athenians scored a goal in the space of five minutes. Then the excitement gradually rose higher and higher till it reached boiling point, and the shouts of the crowd grew loud and incessant. The two elevens fought their hardest, for they knew that the Cup depended on the issue of this game. There was no other team in the competition which was con-

sidered to be "in it" at all, consequently victory must mean the Cup for one side or the other. Every good bit of play met with instant recognition, and frantic cheering broke out on every opportunity. Both teams had pulled themselves together, and were doing their level best.

The interest was breathless; one elderly clergyman carried out of himself by excitement, rapped down the hat he was waving enthusiastically on the umbrella which an old woman in front of him had put up to keep off the wind, and sent her clean over. There was much laughter about it afterwards, but at the moment the bystanders were too much engrossed to take any notice of it, for it is only two minutes to time, and Pemberton has got the ball, and is doing a little dribbling.

The crowd grow absolutely frantic—they think he is keeping it too long. Shouts of "Kick!" "Get rid of it!" and "Pass!" but he knows what he is about. He has got within shooting distance of the goal now, and the cries change to "Shoot!" He gets past one forward, and then another, tackled by a back, he wrenches himself away to a storm of cheers, and for one instant there is a clear line for a shot at the goal.

"Shoot!" shouts the crowd as with one hoarse yell, and steadying himself for a moment, he puts in a hard high shot for the corner of the goal, when a back comes thundering down on him with a vicious charge, and sends him rolling over with a heavy thud; but at the same moment that his head touches the grass, the ball goes spinning gaily through the posts, and a tremendous cheer goes up to proclaim victory for the Athenians. The Cup is won!

The referee's whistle blows long, loud and shrill, announcing by the same blast—"Time—goal—man hurt!"

The Athenians had won by two goals to one, and Hugh Pemberton, the gallant centre half-back was the hero of the hour. The crowd were waiting to give him an ovation—but where was he?

There was still a great noise of cheering, but suddenly it stopped; men ceased to wave their hats, and looked questioningly at each other's faces. A chill, a cold shivering chill, fell across the fever of their enthusiasm.

Beatrice had been as much excited as anyone there, and she could not understand the sudden silence which fell like a blight on the seething multitude. At first a small group collected near the middle

of the ground, but during the last few minutes, thousands of people had gathered round the group and hidden it completely from her eyes.

"Why don't they chair him? Isn't that what they call it? And why are they all so dumb?"

"I'll see if your carriage is here," Townsend-Rivers said, with apparent irrelevancy. "You ought to go home, or you will both be laid up with colds."

Beatrice looked straight in his face, and her own grew as white as her handkerchief. "Something has happened," she said slowly, as an icy grip seemed to be laid on her heart.

"Did you hear what that man said?" Flo exclaimed breathlessly. "He—he said, 'It's all up with the poor fellow!' Is anyone hurt?"

"Go—for God's sake—go," Beatrice implored, and Townshend-Rivers after one look in her face—went. There are moments when delay means fiendish cruelty.

All the other men whom they knew had vanished from the pavilion, and the girls were practically alone. Flora listened with strained ears to every word she could catch from the crowd below as Pemberton's name passed from lip to lip, but Beatrice stood bolt upright, her dark eyes seeing nothing, though fixed on the crowded space in front of her, her lips parted, her whole expression one of absorbing dread. Hugh Pemberton was dead! She felt sure of it, yes, quite sure. Everything that was most dreadful always happened now. He had just come back to her to be the friend—the brother—that she needed so desperately, so of course he was taken from her!

"Oh God! What *will* become of me?" The words broke from her against her will, and even without her knowledge—the outcome of this horror of great loneliness which was settling down on her frightened soul.

Flora looked up at her with startled eyes. The words seemed to her the revelation of a fact she dared not face. She clung to her arm, trembling violently, without the power of uttering even one sympathetic platitude. In the midst of her agitation she caught sight of one of the Athenians, elbowing his way towards them, and after an instant of doubt because of his mud-stained features and clothes, recognised Val Forrester.

"Nothing to be alarmed at," he cried cheerfully, as his eyes glanced from one frightened face to the other, and he saw that he

must measure his words. "Only a slight concussion, the doctor says. May be on his legs again in a week's time."

The relief was so immense, that Beatrice gave a little hysterical laugh, but could not speak a word. Her eyes were swimming in tears—glad tears of thankfulness to know that Hugh was still in the same world as herself—and her shaking hands could scarcely fasten her veil which had come undone.

She was grateful to Flora for asking the questions she wanted to put to Forrester, but she could say nothing herself. In answer, he swore on his honour that he was not deceiving them, and told her that they were going to take Pemberton home in the brake which had brought them on to the ground, and that either he or Townie would look after the poor chap.

Then he offered to escort them to the carriage, apologising for his disreputable appearance, but they were only too glad of his assistance as the crowd were streaming through the gates. Beatrice would have been rather less than woman if she had not longed to go to Hugh, and judge of his real condition with her own eyes. A man is so chary of the details by which the feminine sex set great store. A slight concussion was terribly vague—it might be a euphemism for a fractured skull, bringing lasting injury to speech and intellect, and what would life be worth, denied of its mental powers!

Forrester utterly engrossed with Flora Vivian, who had come to the match at his earnest entreaty, was attempting to convey to her ready mind some idea of the pleasure it had given him to know that she was looking on. With that pretty blushing face upturned to his, he forgot everything else, and never noticed that the pressure of the crowd had forced Lady Falconer to drop behind him. Bewildered and confused, unable to discover the Clifford liveries in the fast decaying light, she looked over the sea of strange faces hoping to find a friend, but not one could she recognise.

"I never knew a fellow before kick the ball into goal, and himself into 'Kingdom Come' by the same stroke. I'd have given a pony to see it." The voice was her husband's—the words froze her blood. As Lester, the man he was talking to, exclaimed in frank disgust, "Falconer, you are the cold-bloodedest brute I ever came across," Beatrice shrunk shudderingly away—anywhere, anywhere out of her husband's sight or contact. In a wild hurry to be gone, she plunged recklessly into the road where the traffic was thickest.

She heard a cry, a volley of angry curses, the jingle of harness was close to her ears—the hot breath of a horse was close to her face, when a firm clutch was placed on her shoulder, which dragged her back on to the safe shelter of the kerb. Then a sudden faintness came over her, and she seemed to be slipping down into nothingness through a thick mist.

His own wife—that was the joke of it—and not somebody else's! Falconer looked down into the pale, pure face with a stupid bewilderment on his own. This was the woman whom he had pursued to the Royal Club with the fiercest anger in his heart; and instead of bullying her into submission, he had saved her life! If he had not stretched out his arm in time, that young lithe body would have been hideously mangled by the hoofs of the Baron's high spirited thorough-breds, and he himself would have been wifeless—his married life a closed chapter! These thoughts whirled through his brain, while Forrester, appalled and apologetic, pushed his way through the crowd, eager to make up for his past negligence, and the throng pressed closer and closer, and voices hoarse or shrill advanced opinions as to whether the lady was "gone dead, or only wounded," and a policeman cried "Stand back," an order which nobody obeyed, for curiosity was stronger than obedience.

After two minutes, which seemed the length of ten, the brougham was brought up as the Baron's carriage moved on, and Beatrice was lifted into it by her husband's strong arms. Flora looked up into his unresponsive face with widely dilated eyes. "What is it? What has happened to her?" she asked breathlessly, but entirely engrossed with his own thoughts, Falconer only grunted "Home" with a glance at the coachman, and shut the door with a bang.

"An infernally near thing!" remarked Captain Lester, as he threw away his cigar. "Never saw a closer shave in my life."

Falconer did not answer. He was experiencing a sudden revulsion of feeling, and it was difficult for him to sort his emotions.

On arriving at Curzon Street, and inquiring for his wife, Simons had simply informed him that her ladyship had gone out driving at two o'clock: but James, the second footman, when he brought a brandy and soda to the smoking-room had imparted the further information that her ladyship had gone to the Royal Club to see a football match in which Captain Pemberton was playing.

Instantly his jealousy caught fire, and without waiting for anything but a hansom, he started off in pursuit.

As he went he prepared some choice sentences to growl out at his wife, as soon as he found her. He could easily taunt her with this new craze, for he had never known her take an interest in football before, and he could say many scathings things about that "confounded prig." He would not make a scene if he could help it, but he would bring her away with him by force if she wouldn't come without, pack her into the brougham and send her straight home. He would stand no nonsense—by which he meant that he would have his own will, and give no one else a chance. He would show her that she had to obey him whether she liked it or not, as if he were a policeman with a resolute government behind him.

He had made his programme, but Fate drew her pencil through every line. The match was over when he drove up to the gates, and as he jumped out, he heard it confidently asserted that Pemberton was dead, gone too far for even his long arm to reach him. This was the first check.

Then he came upon Lester, who hooked his arm in his, and they went on together, scanning the crowd in search of Lady Falconer. Then the accident happened, and he saw a girl in the act of falling under the horses' hoofs. That girl was his wife and he had saved her. This was the second check. All his rage had quieted down as she rested helplessly in his arms, in the utter self-surrender of unconsciousness. She looked so pure—so entirely different to the bold-eyed women with whom he had lately been surrounded, he could not doubt her—no, doubt was a positive absurdity!

* * * *

"Tell you what, Falconer?" Captain Lester went on in his blundering good nature, "You ought to give her more rope. You take a precious long length yourself."

"Dry up," said Falconer fiercely, and shaking him off as if he were an insect, he walked on alone.

CHAPTER XLI.

WHAT CAME OF IT.

"GOING on splendidly," that was Townshend-Rivers version of Hugh Pemberton's condition, on the scrap of a note which he sent in to Lady Falconer during the course of the evening. It was to say the least an optimistic view of the situation, for the patient was still in a comatose state, incapable of speech or movement; but Townshend-Rivers saw no reason why he should not try to reassure Lady Falconer because Hugh persisted in giving the lie to his words. It would do the fellow no good to have her sobbing out her poor little heart for him a few yards off in Curzon Street, and it would certainly do Lady Falconer a great deal of harm.

Taking a psychological interest in some of the pretty women with whom he came in contact, he made the most of the situation from his highly sympathetic point of view; and arrived at the romantic conclusion that the dragoon's danger would be the Countess's despair. He knew so much of this especial ménage in Mayfair that he was able to gauge the whole range of possibilities as to the Earl's conduct.

If he found his wife bowed down with woe, and suspected that the woe was the direct product of Pemberton's misfortune, he was likely to behave with as much justice, mercy, and moderation, as a Matabele on the war-path. Beatrice would suffer terribly, and her sufferings would in no way advantage Hugh. Ergo, it was well to secure her peace, even at the cost of a white lie. So he told his falsehood with a light heart, and lightened the atmosphere in Clifford House considerably by so doing. The three friends had been engaged to dine with Lady Falconer and go to some theatre afterwards, but Val Forrester was the only one that turned up.

Townshend-Rivers, who had a kindly heart under his outward affectation of cynicism, remained on guard by Hugh's bedside, and Forrester, whom nothing but the barest necessity would have kept from another opportunity of seeing Flora Vivian, promised to relieve him later on. "Later on" leaves a wide margin.

"Look out, old chap—you will have something to tell me when you come back," Townie called after him as he thought of his French novel—the plot of which was fast developing.

"None of your chaff," Val replied, with an actual blush on his boyish countenance, preoccupied as usual with his own love-affair.

"I'd have given anything to have been there," the elder man said to himself, as he sat down again at his post with a regretful sigh. "It will all be wasted on that unfledged chick. The second act of a domestic drama passing before his very eyes, and he will make nothing of it; won't have a thought to spare for anyone but his Phillis. What a wasted opportunity!"

Then he scrutinised Hugh's face with an anxious eye. Frankly speaking, if he had thought of such an imprudence, he did not like the look of it at all. The eyes were fast closed, but the sharply defined brows were drawn together in an almost unbroken line, and this contraction could only be caused by acute pain, or severe pressure on the brain. He grew desperately uneasy as he sat there in the silent room—doubly silent in contrast to the roar of Piccadilly close outside the double windows. The gloomiest of thoughts came into his usually cheerful brain. If this good young fellow died, there would be nobody in London who could take up his position with regard to Lady Falconer.

Galahads are not plentiful, in modern society at least, whatever they were when the world was younger and nearer the age of innocence. Geoffrey Talbot had attempted the rôle of Lancelot—and failed. Townshend-Rivers had not been told a word about it, but he knew it by induction. He knew it from the beginning when Geoffrey tried to induce Beatrice to join a society called "The Affinities," which was got up by those of the smart set who considered themselves the "fine fleur" of the intellect and the wit of the day.

Beatrice had laughingly refused to be his affinity, or that of anyone else, and in spite of the supplications of many of the male members she had kept herself sternly aloof. "She is one in a thousand," Townshend-Rivers decided, for to his certain knowledge no other woman could have been placed in a position of fiercer temptation; and yet she had stood firm, and held her dainty head so high that she could not see the mire at her feet.

And Hugh Pemberton, her one friend, lay there like a log, unable to lift a finger for her aid, her comfort, or her consolation, adding a new anxiety and even terror to the troubles of her life. "It's a queer world," he said to himself, "Things are so generally topsy-turvy that it wouldn't surprise me to be standing on my head."

The trained nurse arrived, and relieved him of his self-imposed duties ; but it was too late to go to Curzon Street. He had a very late dinner at his club, played a game of billiards with his old chum, smoked a good many cigarettes, and finally went back to Pemberton's rooms, where he was joined by Forrester about midnight.

Val had not much to tell, but stood on the rug in front of the stone fender, with an extinct cigar in his hand, and what Townie in his secret irritation called "an idiotic grin" on his lips. It was impossible to drag anything out of him, so poor Townshend-Rivers gave it up in despair. Presently Forrester remarked in an awe-struck tone ; "Do you know Falconer was disappointed—actually *disappointed*, when he found this poor old chap hadn't done for himself."

"What did he say ?" with renewed eagerness.

"It was when we had a smoke together—awful bore—would drag me out, and I came back to find the box chock full—not a chance of speaking to anybody."

"Yes, yes,—" impatiently ; "moths always object to a shade round a candle. What about Falconer ?"

"He began about football being almost as bad as a fight—so much damage done. Then he said something as if Pemberton had slipped the hooks, and when I answered, 'Not half so bad as that. Hope he will pull through in a fortnight,' there was a gleam in his eyes, a positive glare of rage. He looked as if he would have knocked me down with the greatest pleasure."

"I don't doubt it. The beast predominates in Falconer, and he is nothing more than a two-legged tiger."

"But why should he hate old Hugh ?"

"Why shouldn't he?" said Townie quietly. "Virtue and vice are always antagonistic. Anything been heard of the Uncle ?"

"Out of town—Lady Falconer said she had telegraphed."

The two men presently went home, finding that they could do no good to the patient by a longer stay. Hugh was left to the care of the nurse, who had nothing to do but to wait and watch. She did not think very seriously of the case, but as she looked at the young soldier in his helpless inactivity, she wondered if this accident had come like a full stop in the midst of a busy life. If idleness meant ruin to his career, destruction to his fortune, the ruthless blighting of his dearest hopes, it would be all the same. He was in the hands

of a greater power than any mundane sovereignty, and until that hand was taken off him, he was as powerless for good or evil as any mummy in its forgotten grave. He must lie there without raising a finger, or uttering one word—though action or speech might prevent some fearful catastrophe—he must lie there, silent and immutable even if the whole fabric of his worldly desires were toppling in ruins about his golden head.

“Poor fellow,” sighed the nurse with the vivid sympathy which was the natural outcome of her devoted life, “I hope nobody is tangling the skein for him whilst it has dropped from his fingers.”

CHAPTER XLII.

FALCONER'S IDEAS OF EDUCATION.

HUSBAND and wife were both on the watch with eyes and ears as keenly alert as those of a dog left in charge of property, whether the latter consisted of a master's glove, or a house full of people and chattels. Beatrice was doubting if she ought not to send Flora off by the first train the next morning, to save her from the chance of unpleasantness; and yet feeling, as she looked from her pink cheeks to Val's glowing eyes, that it would be hard to break off a love story at the end of the first volume.

Falconer, on the other hand, whilst outwardly amiable, was watching with the utmost keenness for any sign of a broken heart about his wife. Fortunately her great anxiety had been relieved by Townshend-Rivers' mendacious note, so that she could preserve an outward composure, and make herself agreeable whenever the much engrossed Val had a crumb of attention to bestow on his hostess. Falconer looked at her in complacent astonishment.

Pemberton was dead—and “she didn't turn a hair.” She could not have cared a brass farthing for him, or else she was the best actress he had ever seen. Which was it? An immense deal depended on the answer. By the end of the evening he was beginning to imagine that his suspicions were on the wrong tack. She certainly had cared for the fellow as a friend, if nothing more, and yet he was dead, and she was just as chirpy as ever.

Everybody had been impressed with the conviction that Pemberton was her one safe friend. His aunt told him long ago in the plainest language that he would be a fool if he attempted to *chasser* him. The Bishop had implied that he, Falconer, could never have the smallest excuse for shutting the door in the dragoon's face; and yet Hugh Pemberton had been the one man whom he most feared as his own rival. The others had set him up on a pedestal because he was an old playmate, and consequently the oldest of friends, but for those very reasons Falconer felt that he was to be most distrusted. He began on a different footing with Beatrice to any of the rest, and therefore was likely to be the most dangerous.

But now all these fears had vanished into smoke. The fellow was dead, and on the very day of his death under peculiarly agitating circumstances, there was Beatrice looking splendidly handsome and enjoying herself pretty fairly at the theatre! He began to be disgusted at her heartlessness, but after all it was a convenient trait, and it would enable him to go off to America for that much talked of prize-fight, with a tranquil mind as to the wife he left behind him.

Then came the talk with Forrester, and all was changed. His security left him—the ground slipped from under his feet. Whilst he was imagining Pemberton safe out of the way for ever, his wife knew that he was only slightly hurt, and already on the road to recovery. This accounted for the composure of her bearing, and sent him back at the same moment into the whirlpool of jealousy.

Beatrice could not imagine what new cause of offence had brought such a depression in the mental barometer; but at the first sign of a cyclonic disturbance she made up her mind that Flora must go. Whatever was coming she must bear alone: but when she announced this decision in the small hours of the morning, Flora absolutely refused to obey her. She guessed intuitively that she was to be sent away for her own good, just when Beatrice was likely to want her most; and she asked indignantly if her friendship were of that shallow kind which dried up in the hour of trouble. Her remonstrances were so urgent, her refusals to "budge" so positive, that Beatrice at last, in spite of many misgivings, relented.

It was decidedly better for her sake that Flora should stay, for she was some sort of check on Lord Falconer, but Beatrice was not likely to be swayed by purely selfish considerations. Val Forrester was an important element in the matter. Her own experience

made her fastidious about the choice of husbands for her friends; but, after studying Forrester carefully, she was convinced that under no circumstances would he behave unkindly or roughly to a wife. He had steady principles, honest ambitions, a clean past, as far as she could tell, behind him—a bright future before him.

If it is true that in all men there is something of the brute, there could only be the least particle in Val. He was a thorough gentleman, and he was not ashamed of being a Christian as well, with no leanings towards either chilly agnosticism or vague theosophy. He would suit Flora Vivian better than any other man she had ever met, and he was therefore a prize which it would be a sad pity to lose by a sudden cessation of propinquity—that most powerful factor in all love affairs. With some misgivings she let her stay, and a life of complete unrest for them both began.

The next morning, after returning from church, delighted by the beautiful music, and cheered by the eloquent words of the preacher, Beatrice asked for her boy, and received the answer that she most dreaded—Lord Clifford was in the smoking-room with his Lordship.

She and Flora had gone round to Hugh's lodgings to inquire after him, so they reached home rather late, at the same time that some friends dropped in from the winter imitation of the Church parade; and they sat down to luncheon at once without waiting to take off their hats. Beatrice thought that the best way to get Cliff out of the smoking-room was to have luncheon, and her surmise proved to be correct, for no sooner had they taken their seats than the Earl came in, looking the impersonation of a fond father with his little son perched on his shoulder. It was a charming picture, the guests thought as they looked at the pair—the father with his splendid physique and handsome countenance, and his life's experience written on every line of it—the child beautiful as a cherub, unsullied innocence depicted on his baby face, and yet with a tiny spark of the devil in his reckless laughing eyes, as he clasped a glass ball he was forbidden to play with in one chubby hand, and held on with the other to his father's short black hair.

Falconer nodded to his friends, and walked straight up to the other end of the table, where his wife was sitting. He had brooded all the morning in sullen, morose uncalled-for rage—and this was the outcome of it.

Beatrice sat quite still, her eyes fixed on that tiny bundle of lace

and velvet with the bright head above it, as if it had the power of some snake to fascinate her. The buzz of conversation dwindled into silence. A feeling of expectancy was in the air. Falconer was a dark horse on which nobody ever felt equal to betting. He might do anything—or nothing. He was close to his wife now—already her lips were parting in a smile, as she raised her arms to receive her child.

An expression of low cunning shot across her husband's eyes, furtively he touched the glass ball, which slipped from the tiny hand on to the Turkey carpet. "Now then"—he whispered.

Clear and shrill rose the child's treble :

"Damn it—it's broke!" he cried with a jubilant laugh. But the ball was solid. The carpet was soft and the ball had not broken, though a mother's heart had.

The next moment the boy was on the floor—scrambling after his lost plaything. Falconer went back to his seat with a chuckle. The guests, to do them justice, felt disgusted and revolted, but began to talk as if nothing had happened, in order to cover an uncomfortable situation. Flora's eyes were fixed on the mother in eager sympathy, as she sat up with her utmost dignity, her shoulder slightly turned on her host. Beatrice was as white as the table-napkin which slipped down on to the floor, as she stood up. She caught Pickles in her arms, though he was much too heavy for her, and whisked him out of the nearest door, which some man opened for her.

"Leave the little beggar alone!" her husband called out as the door closed upon her. He showed some intention of getting up to interfere, but Milly courageously laid her pretty little hand on his arm to stop him. "Don't desert me," she said with a pout.

"Jolly little chap—isn't he?" he said as he changed his mind and kept his seat. "I'll make a man of him—before I've done with him."

"A monster more likely," she answered sweetly.

"That's distinctly uncivil," he objected grumbling.

"They are often synonymous," she answered with an ambiguous smile, whilst her neighbour spelt out the word "Heredity" on the spotless tablecloth with the point of his finger, and she glanced at it over her shoulder with instant comprehension of his meaning.

CHAPTER XLIII.

ALARMED.

BEATRICE was in despair. She could undergo anything, or she thought she could—if ill-treatment began and ended with herself. But to see her child's innocence deliberately soiled was more than she could possibly stand. Every instinct cried out against it. It was impossible to stand by and watch the work of degradation proceeding under her eyes, and yet she knew that as her husband had begun, so he would go on from bad to worse, and the sweet baby lips, that seemed to have the breath of heaven about them, would be profaned by the words that Falconer so often uttered, and scorched by the spirits he so habitually drank. Once the child had run to her, choking, spluttering, stammering, "Nasty 'tuff—nasty 'tuff—burnt Pickles!" And as she bent over him she knew that his father must have given him a sip of brandy out of his glass as if in sheer perversity of evil, he absolutely wished to make the boy follow in his steps, before he had discarded his baby shoes and velvet frocks.

Falconer's affection for the child, on the other hand, seemed to be the one humanizing sentiment he could feel, and Pickles would throw aside anything to run helter-skelter down the broad stair-case as soon as he heard his father calling to him. The little fellow was not in the least afraid of him, and when his father's face was looking as gloomy as a November sky, he would go up to him and clasp one of his legs with his small arms, begging with all the insistence of an unrestrained will, to be taken up on his shoulder at once. Sometimes he would avert a domestic storm by running in with his happy laugh, and serene unconsciousness of anything disagreeable. He was the sunbeam of the house, and yet a source of infinite trouble to his mother.

She was not half so afraid of the many illnesses which may befall a child, as she was of the moral blight with which he was likely to be infected by his father. How could she fight against the curse of heredity, when her influence was being undermined in every possible way? How could she sit with any peace of mind in her own comfortable den, if she suspected that her boy was perched on

the table in the smoking-room, his little nose growing fatally accustomed to the smell of spirits, his tiny sharp ears taking in the coarse blasphemies which ought never to have been uttered in his hearing? When she made a passionate appeal to her husband, he told her coolly that it was no business of hers. If it had been a girl he would have let her "molly-coddle" her as much as she liked, but as "it" was a boy he would have his own way with him, and she needn't interfere.

"Interfere!" she cried in an indignant remonstrance, all the instincts of motherhood wrought up in revolt against the insolence of the word. "You seem to forget that I am his mother!"

"Not a bit, but with me for his father you couldn't make him into an angel if you tried."

"I don't know that," she said gravely. "His soul came straight from the hand of God—that must be pure at least!"

"I know nothing about his soul, poor little chap, but his make, his face, his very hands and feet, are all a copy of mine—everyone says so. There's nothing of the canting Kennards about him," he concluded triumphantly.

"You are very civil," she said tersely, taking notice of the remark she cared for least, because the others held a truth which it was too painful to discuss.

"Cant is your particular hobby—your father's a preacher of it, and you try to stand in his shoes."

"If by 'cant' you mean religion—" throwing back her head—

"What you call religion—yes—" he interrupted. "But the whole thing's a gigantic humbug. You humbug yourselves first, and then you are death on taking in other people."

"The humbug is all your own," she said with intense bitterness—"You pretended to be a Churchman and a gentleman, when I married you, but you are neither."

"And I am both. The Cliffords date back to the days of Queen Bess—isn't that good enough for you? And as to the other thing—I'm not a caddish dissenter, and I'm not such a fool as to be an atheist. I know that I couldn't have made myself, so somebody must have made me."

"And so you call yourself a Churchman?" the utmost contempt in her tone.

"I should rather think I did," emphatically.

"And you expect that large amount of religion to carry you through life and death?"

"I don't trouble my head about that. I'm likely to live as long as other fellows, and I'm going to have a good time if I can manage it. You women, you've got to be religious, or else you fall into no end of mischief," he was good enough to add, with a nod to emphasize it, as he hurried away, suddenly remembering an appointment at Lincoln's Inn.

His thoughts rarely rose above horse-racing—gambling on the turf, or the green board, or the rarer excitements of the prize ring, but to-day they went on an unusual track. Some time or other this jolly sort of life would end, his eyes would lose their keenness, his muscles their vigour, his enormous strength would go from him. When he could no longer shoot, or hunt, or bet, or gamble, or make love, what then? All other fields of delight in the way of Art or Music were closed to him, for he had no interest in either. What then? the inner voice repeated in louder tones. When pretty eyes no longer looked into his, when women's voices no longer whispered tender words into his ears, when he himself used up—bored to death—without a single hope or illusion—had to face the stagnation of old age—what then? Pshaw! he might never live to be old.

He flicked his whip in the air over his horses' heads, and they sprang forward in their collars as if they were going to take him down Piccadilly in a hand gallop. But they soon had to moderate their pace, for there was some exhibition going on at Burlington House, a performance at the Egyptian Hall, etc., etc., and the road was thronged with vehicles of every sort. Presently the phaeton came to a standstill. There was a sudden block. Carts, carriages, and even the bustling and all important omnibuses stopped. Falconer supposed that Royalty was near at hand, or a troop of Life Guards going to rattle by, but it was only a humble walking funeral which was allowed to cross the road undisturbed, because Death takes precedence of Life.

For a few short moments, with cold hand upraised, he checks the every day bustle of the world. Falconer looked askance at the small train of unimportant mourners, but his careless glance stopped on the tiny coffin, as it struck him shudderingly that it would have been just the right size for Pickles. The pall was black and white,

and in the centre of the blackness lay an ill-made cross of white chrysanthemums. Flowers were dear at the time, and it was doubtless all that the sorrowing mourners could afford. But the pooriness of the cross seemed to offend him.

"Dirt cheap!" he said to himself. "Hang it all, they might have given him something better than that. Why does a child ever die?" He hated the thought of it. There were lots of fellows he knew who would be better out of the world than in it; the world even would profit by their absence, but a child could do no harm to anyone.

"Hi! Lester!" he bent forward eagerly, and beckoned to his friend who was looking in at a shop window. "Did you see that thing pass just now?" he asked as soon as Captain Lester, on his eager invitation, was seated by his side.

"Some poor little brat's first and last procession?" he answered carelessly.

"Yes, they ought not to let such a thing pass through the streets. I call it scandalous."

"That's good. Would you have a set of funeral balloons? Ha, ha, it would cost a pretty penny."

"I'm not such a lunatic," gruffly. "But they ought to manage these things better—get them over early in the morning—"

"Early this morning there was such a fog, ten to one they would not have spotted the grave. But I never knew you put yourself out about such a trifle before," looking up at him curiously. "How's the little chap?"

"Well as possible, why do you ask?" frowning.

"Thought there must be something up." Then with a quick change of subject, he asked where they were bound for.

"Lincoln's Inn, to see that old skinflint. After that, to the Pelican to find out when that confounded match is coming off."

The conversation drifted into matters concerning the prize-ring, and Falconer went back into a more usual phase of thought, in fact such a usual phase of commonplace coarseness that it need not be chronicled.

(To be continued.)

The Ideal House.

BY JOHN STRANGE WINTER.

IN THE MATTER OF CONSERVATORIES AND HOUSE-PLANTS.

GENTLE READER—I am, practically speaking, bound to begin this paper with the words “gentle reader,” for it is a fact worthy of notice that when certain metaphorical pills have to be swallowed, certain phrases are almost invariably used as a gilding or sugar-coating. There is a well-known song, now a little, or I might more truly say a good deal out of date, which *indeed* was dear to the hearts of our grandmothers. It begins “Do not trust him, gentle lady; gentle lady, heed him not,” and tells an old old story in verse of exceedingly halting character set to a singularly unlovely tune. I know an aged divine in London-town who always prefaces a request with the words—“Gracious Lady,” and it mostly has the desired effect until the fount of pity has run dry. A certain very distinguished actress, who graces both the stage and the social circle with her very dominant and virtuous personality, invariably begins a real disagreeable speech with the phrase “Dear lady;” and another of the same cult, who might be understudy to the first, copies her in this little idiosyncrasy with a fidelity which is simply ludicrous.

So in my case, I begin this chapter of Ideal House with words which foretell at once an apology and a warning. My warning is that my readers must not look in this article for an abbreviated essay on the care of a conservatory, and my apology is for venturing into this region at all. I am’ no gardener. I dearly love a green-garden in my house, and I am rather lucky with my plants, but I could not write a handbook on the care of house-plants any more than I could write a treatise on Coptic, or on the language spoken by the Choctaw Indians.

I would advise any Angelina whose experience of house-plants is limited, to treat herself to a shillingsworth of advice such as can be had from several well-known publishing houses. My friend, Mrs. Chamberlain, is a great authority on all sorts and conditions of

gardening, and knows all that there is to know about green things both indoors and out. Not for worlds would I in my ignorance trench upon her experienced knowledge, and what I am going to say about conservatories and indoor plants will not in any way trench upon the same ground as that dealt with either in Mrs. Chamberlain's writings or in those of any other recognised authority on the subject. For I am going to speak on the decorative not the technical aspect of the conservatory, and I take it that it lies well within my province to speak on such a matter.

We will take it for granted that our Edwin and Angelina have acquired a house with a special place for the care of plants. Then first let me beg of Angelina—for it is usually the wife who arranges the conservatory—as her first and most special rule to make her conservatory a place for keeping her plants in and nothing else. It is the fashion in some London houses to transform the conservatory into an eastern lounge to be used for smoking purposes. Well and good, but in that case make it a lounge and no more—do not attempt to combine the two, gentle Angelina, don't put any Japanese fans as a “pretty” background to your ferns, nor decorate the walls with the worst and most broken portion of your china collection. You might as well attempt to art-decorate your lawn or your back-yard.

Personally I object to lounging chairs in a conservatory unless it is a very spacious one, large enough to have sufficient room to ensure that one has no contact with the plants and does not get damp.

In an ordinary London house the conservatory is such that there is no chance of putting chairs therein; it is generally a mere slip of a place taken off the width of the landing midway between the hall and the first floor. It is always grimy and frequently of an icy coldness, enough to kill most of the green things put to live in it. In the coldest weather it is generally shut carefully off from the house by protecting doors, because Edwin and Angelina do not like draughts. It does not matter much if Edwin and Angelina are country folk who only spend the season in a London house. In that case they will very wisely send to some respectable florist and make a bargain for the keeping of their house-garden in beauty while their stay lasts. But for the young couple who live in the house all the year round, and who do not house-keep by the mere giving of orders, this is not a practical way of doing. Angelina must see to her conservatory herself.

Let me therefore advise her not to attempt to make for herself a joy in that way without starting aright. She must first see that her conservatory is daintily tiled, and there should be a ledge at the door which will prevent any damp from flowing into the house. I rather like plain linen blinds, without any tassels or fringes, but I abhor any form of curtains or drapery. Don't, dear Angelina, if you have a large and lofty palm as a centre-piece to your green-show tie a sash round the pot thereof. A sash for a flower-pot is only permissible in a drawing-room when you cannot afford an ornamental flower-pot and happen to have several old sashes which will hide the rough pot in which the plant is growing. You know that nowadays you can get a large blue, green or yellow pot for about three shillings. Failing that much, you can buy a coarse red earthenware breadpan with handles, and enamel it any colour you choose; and this will not cost more than a few pence. I am not what the boys call "death" on enamel for the house—it carries upon it all too plainly the trail of the amateur—but there are times when such makeshifts are permissible. For instance, here in France, I can find nothing of a *cachepot* under ten francs—equal to eight shillings—and I have enamelled in turquoise blue, to my great satisfaction, some of the common red earthenware cooking pots of this country. It has cost but a mere trifle for about a dozen of them; but they leak a bit if water is left to stand in them, and I make them as little prominent in my salon and hall as may be. To guard the tables on which they stand from water-stain I utilise any old pieces of *toile ciré* that I possess, and am well pleased with the result.

Equally I would condemn for any permanent house, ideal or otherwise, the muslin which is called by the name of Liberty, as part and parcel of a conservatory. Liberty muslins are often exquisite in colour and design, and may be used in fifty ways, each one to advantage. But draped about a conservatory, Liberty, or any other muslin or fabric, is nothing more nor less than a horror to all rightminded people. To keep plants in good order they must be freely watered and they must remain in a warm moist atmosphere, such as is good for neither people nor fabrics; *ergo* have nothing in your conservatory that can in any way be spoiled or affected injuriously by that atmosphere.

If Angelina wishes to be really successful I think she will have

a tank for water and a tap placed above it at one end of her house-garden. I would suggest that she has a short length of gutta-percha tubing, adjustable to the tap, and fitted at the end with a rose such as will send a fine spray to any part as may be wished. Under the tank a small stove might be set—say a cheap and homely Beatrice, for I suppose if I ventured to say a gas stove, I should have all the gardeners down upon me. This would in winter, at a very trifling cost, keep the little house at an evenly warm and moist temperature, and in this, with ordinary luck, many charming green things will grow and flourish exceedingly.

Let me recommend Angelina to begin modestly, to learn to creep before she runs. Let her not despise the common aspidestria because those who keep milk-shops know that it is one of the hardiest plants that can be trained to withstand a London winter. Don't, Angelina, sneer at india-rubber plants—they are beautiful, with their broad green glossy leaves and tall straight stems. So are the lighter tinted castor-oil plants and the rougher kinds of palms. Then, too, there are many kinds of hardy ferns, and by the enterprising a delightful border to surround a conservatory can be made of the most ordinary species. For instance, suppose that our Angelina has four or five shelves around the walls of her little garden-house—in each of them the pot will be hidden by the green of the plants on the shelf below. But the lowest shelf of all needs some special arrangement, some kind of trimming as it were. Don't have cork or bark—it means earwigs and such objectionable things. Have a set of flower-boxes running the entire length of the shelves, which can be faced with tiles or with that smart railing which is sold for ornamenting the edge of dados. In these boxes, which should all have adequate drainage, may be planted a variety of things—creeping jenny, stone-crop, ice-plants, small hydrangeas, mother-o'-thousands, lobelias and even balsams, which should be nipped when about six or eight inches high to prevent straggling. Hyacinths and various kinds of lilies may take their turn along with tulips and the ever fragrant musk.

This border must not be placed lower than the bottom of the window, and will be, with a little care, a never ceasing joy to the house-mistress, and the admiration of her friends. Above can come the several tiers of shelves, or if such an arrangement is not possible from this border can rise the various schemes for placing the plants.

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For instance, supposing that the conservatory boasts of an entire glass side, or rather of three windows placed together, Angelina might have the border as I have suggested, and between each window what might be described as a *panache* of plants, rising one above the other to the very ceiling. In front of each window a large wire basket might hang, the effect of which would be excellent. At each side of the doors, allowing Angelina a space to step in, there might be a rather tall circular stand which I would recommend to be of wire, the best and cleanest, and these might be filled with all manner of easily reared plants.

Let me assure Angelina that a well-kept conservatory gives a style to a house that can never be obtained from all the rags and tatters which can be bought in Regent Street. But she must no more think of leaving her plants undusted than of leaving her baby's face unwashed. She must no more dream of leaving her green things without air, warmth and water, than of letting her dog or her cat go hungry and thirsty. A conservatory needs but little attention but it needs it regularly, and that is one of the chief secrets of success with the plant world.

What funny things one sees as one goes through life ! Not long ago I saw a superb conservatory with a great domed roof, a regular winter garden, such as filled me with envy. The floor was tiled, doors led into the principal reception rooms, the surround of window boxes was very large, and tall plants towered high over my head. It was charming—it might have been a paradise, but, alas ! the central note of all was a spiral staircase of ornamental iron-work, and this was carefully draped from top to bottom with a much-washed drapery of red and white chintz ! One could only say with the great Rachel—" *Hélas !* "

(*To be continued.*)

George Wilson, M.D.

By HORACE WYNDHAM

"MARION, dear, I want to introduce Mr. Wilson to you."

It was Mrs. L'Estrange speaking. The tall graceful girl, leaning idly against the trunk of an elm, a tennis racket in her hand, was watching the players languidly. It was much too hot to play, too hot to do anything almost, but sit in the shade and eat strawberries.

"Mr. Wilson, my niece, Miss L'Estrange. Marion, Mr. Wilson is going back to India in September, and thinks of sailing in the Chunda—the same ship as your own, you know. As you may be fellow travellers, you ought to know each other."

"Delighted, I'm sure, to have the opportunity," replied her new acquaintance, in the conventional manner of the conventional young man of the day. Somehow, something in the tone of his voice attracted Marion's attention. She turned round to shake hands. With a faint, half-stifled gasp, her hand fell to her side.

Mr. Wilson was a native!

In a moment, however, she recovered herself, and greeted him heartily enough. Her aunt fluttered away to attend to other guests. Presently they were chatting together as if they were old friends. Her instinctive repugnance to his nationality speedily vanished under the charm of his conversation. He talked well, certainly, and, moreover, interested her. How odd it seemed, though, that she should be talking so confidentially to a, well—person of colour.

"I hear you are going out to the shining East, Miss L'Estrange," he remarked. "What part do you intend to visit?"

"Well, you can hardly call it a visit. The fact is I mean to live there."

"To live there? Do you mean altogether?"

"Yes, for some time at any rate. Why not? I must tell you, Mr. Wilson, that I am going out as a medical missionary. The condition of women in India is an unhappy one. I don't want to boast, but I think that Englishwomen, who have been medically trained, can do a great deal for them. I have pledged myself for five years in the service of the London Medical Mission. My station is to be Myndoonie, in Eastern Bengal."

"How odd!" replied her companion, "Myndoonie's my destination as well. I've been walking the hospitals here for some time, and now that I've got my M.D. I mean to go back to my paternal home. I was brought up near Myndoonie, and, as I'm known there, I think it's the best place to settle in. I have a good deal of Malay blood in me, certainly, but I'm practically a Hindu. I'm afraid you'll find it rather lonely, though, as I do not think there are any white women in the district. The climate is against it."

"That won't discourage me, Mr. Wilson," answered Marion, "besides, I'm going for work, not for company."

"You'll get plenty of that, Miss L'Estrange. Still, it's a good thing to have both. Well, I must say goodbye now, or rather *au revoir*."

* * * *

Somehow or other, Marion L'Estrange seemed to see a good deal of Mr. Wilson during the few weeks that elapsed before the eventful day in September arrived, on which she was to sail. Her aunt, too, seemed rather to encourage his visits, and that gentleman himself, finding so cordial a welcome awaiting him, seemed nothing loth to avail himself of the opportunity of calling two or three times a week at The Laurels. Marion, with a feminine instinct, as to the particular inducement of these frequent visits, took the opportunity of absenting herself on two or three occasions. Her aunt, however, looked at it in a different light, and gave her to understand that she expected her to assist in entertaining the guest.

"He will be very useful to you when you are in India," she explained. "English ladies don't travel much out there, I'm told, and if you happen to want anything from Calcutta or Madras, for instance, I've no doubt he will be glad to get it for you."

The good lady, in her truly British fashion, seemed to be under the impression that India was about the same size as her own little Hertfordshire village, only not quite so important a portion of the universe, and that the capitals of the Presidencies were within a few hours' journey of each other.

Gradually it became clear, even to the slightly obtuse minded Mrs. L'Estrange, that the real object of Mr. Wilson's constant visits was the idea of entering the estate of Holy Matrimony with her niece. He had enlarged with great pertinacity on the desolate nature of the lives of single English ladies in that country, and the almost imperative necessity for their being married.

At first she refused altogether to entertain his propositions for a moment, but, by degrees, he succeeded in inducing her to listen more favourably, and, eventually, she gave him her promise to do her best to further his cause with her niece.

When the subject was first broached to Marion, she felt all her old repugnance to his race rise anew within her. By degrees, however, she dismissed such thoughts as unworthy, and came to the conclusion that, in marrying a native, she would, after all, be only doing what was being done everyday. Besides, a great point in his favour was that he was of the same faith as herself. Educated in a missionary college, he had been brought up a Christian from his childhood. He was clever enough to advance, as a reason for their union, that, by becoming his wife, her own particular work would be rendered much more effectual.

"I must tell you, dear," he said, one day, "that if you were single out there, or even married to a European, you wouldn't be able to enter any of the native women's quarters. They are much too jealously guarded. As my wife, however, you will be able to go where you like. You will be able to do a great work."

This prospect, coupled with her aunt's entreaties, at length decided her. But, before the marriage took place, an event occurred which upset her more than she cared to think.

Her cousin, Francis L'Estrange, who, when they were both children, had been her playfellow, came home on a short furlough from his Indian tea-garden, and came down to The Laurels one day to say good-bye. His mother told him of the projected marriage.

"I must see Marion at once," he said, when she had finished, "where is she?"

"In the garden, I think, dear. Promise me, my boy, that you won't try to alter her decision; her mind is made up, and it's all for the best, I'm sure."

Out into the shady old garden strode Francis L'Estrange with a white strangely drawn face. Could this be true? His beautiful Marion going to marry a beastly nigger? He would rather see her in her grave first. Sitting in a low wicker chair, under a spreading clump of rhododendrons, he came across her. As he approached, she dropped her book, and looked up with a start.

"What is it, George? Oh! I beg your pardon, Francis, I didn't recognise you at first?"

"Who's George?" he demanded, "the nigger, I suppose." Then losing all restraint, he burst out passionately—

"Look here, Marion. Is it true that you are going to marry a nigger? For God's sake tell me it is not. Surely, there's time, even now, to change your mind. Give up this nonsense about a career in India—it's not the place for white women—and send that black beggar about his business. You don't mean to say that you—you love him?"

The girl stood erect, with flashing eyes, and her lip curling angrily. "I don't know by what right you presume to speak to me in this manner, Francis. Mr. Wilson is not a nigger, as you have the bad taste to call him; he is a native gentleman—a Hindu—and one whom I sincerely respect. When you know that I am to marry him, it should be sufficient for you. And as for my going to India, it is to do the Master's work," she added in a softer tone.

"The Master's work be—well—blanked. It is the Devil's work," he answered hotly. "You must forgive me, Marion," he went on more gently, "but you really don't know what your marrying a native means. I've lived in India, and I've seen so many such cases, and know the utter misery, and even worse, that always follows such unnatural unions. I am really speaking in your own interest. At one time, dear, I had hope of another plan for you, of a time when you and I should be together. There is yet time to change your mind. For your dear sake, give up the idea."

"Thank you, Francis. I know what you are referring to, but it can never be. I am sure that you mean well, but my mind is already made up, and I cannot turn back now. I am sure that you are quite mistaken in the prejudiced view that you take."

"God grant it, although I'm sincerely afraid," he continued impiously to himself, "that the Devil will have something to do with it."

A footstep fell upon the gravelled path. Marion looked up, and gave a little cry. George Wilson stood beside her chair, half hidden by the shadow of the tree. Francis looked at him fixedly. How much had he heard? Apparently nothing, for his face seemed quite expressionless. Francis could make nothing of him. "It's always the way with these black beggars," he murmured to himself, "you can never tell what they're really up to."

Marion recovered herself immediately, and introduced the men.

"George, this is my cousin, Mr. L'Estrange. He has just come to say good-bye to me."

Mr. Wilson shook hands cordially enough. Still, Francis couldn't get rid of the idea that there was a half concealed gleam of malice in his eyes, and a suppressed passion in his voice, as he greeted his fiancée. Soon he took his leave, sick at heart at the manner in which his plans had been frustrated.

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On the first week of September they were married. It was a quiet wedding, and Mrs. L'Estrange, and the curate who performed the ceremony, were the only friends present. Marion's relations had held strictly aloof, sternly refusing to compromise themselves, one way or the other. On the whole, however, they rather approved of it. The withdrawal of a pretty girl, like Marion, gave their own less favoured progeny considerable more chance of securing the few eligible *partis* that the neighbourhood boasted. She had no parents, poor girl, and felt her loneliness at this time, very much.

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One day, about twelve months after these events, young L'Estrange in his bungalow at Chattapoonie, received a letter from his mother, which disturbed him not a little.

"Can you tell me," she wrote, "Marion's present address? I have not heard from her for over five months, although I have written several times. Find out what it means, if you can. I am very uneasy about it. Have they left Myndoonie?"

"Not heard from Marion for more than five months!" What on earth did it mean? This must be looked into at once. Fortunately, his partner in the estate was coming back in a day or two, and he would be able to take a few weeks' leave. The contemplated trip to Calcutta must be given up. He could go later on.

At the end of the week L'Estrange went to Myndoonie, and commenced inquiries immediately. It was a wretched Bengal fever and famine stricken district, chiefly populated by half-starved ryots. No one apparently knew anything about Mr. and Mrs. Wilson.

A long continued draught had devastated the neighbourhood, and the few Europeans, who for their sins, lived in the place, had long since sought the more congenial climate of the hills. A thought struck him! Could she be dead? After some trouble, he found the official who acted as a Registrar, and from his books, ascertained

that this, at any rate, was not the case. From him he also learned, after much questioning, that Marion and her husband had arrived there in October, but had left in the following April. As to where they had gone, he could not inform the sahib. Allah was great, and he, Sham Sing, was his honour's faithful servant.

L'Estrange very heartily cursed him, and his ancestors, for several generations, for an incompetent idiot, and journeyed back to Chattapoonie by easy stages.

One evening it chanced that he selected as his halting-place the village of Patipur. Tired out by his journey, and sick at heart at the fruitless result of his mission, he made his way to the *dhak* bungalow, where he intended to put up for the night.

The kitmaghar received him with open arms, and assured him, as was his custom, that he was his father, and also his mother, and, what was more to the point, that there was a vacant bedroom, although the bungalow was just then unusually full.

Not feeling inclined for company, Francis dined alone, but, later on, went out to his verandah to indulge in a final cheroot. Three men, reclining comfortably in lounge chairs, looked up for a moment as he entered, and then continued chatting. L'Estrange declined to join them, or even to accept a peg when offered, and they accordingly put him down, like true Anglo-Indians, as an ill conditioned Yahoo, and talked disjointedly among themselves.

As he sat by himself in the shadow, brooding over the mystery surrounding Marion and her husband, a half caught fragment of their conversation caused him to rouse himself.

"One of the queerest things I've known in all my experience of the country," one of them, a callow youth of twenty-three, a civil servant of about two year's standing, was saying—

"Did you know her then?" asked his companion, who was in the Police.

"I met her, first of all, just after she came out, and I could see then that her amiable husband had already commenced to display the cloven hoof. The Ethiopian, we are told, on competent authority, cannot change his skin, and, by the same token, his nature cannot be expected to alter with his surroundings. He may get a veneer of civilization by contact with such superior people as ourselves, for instance, but it soon wears off when he gets back to his natural surroundings. He's bound to return, sooner or later, to his

original elements. It's always the way, and it's a mystery to me what possesses a white woman to marry a native. Her people ought to be prosecuted if they don't interfere. George Wilson, M.D., is about as nice a specimen of the genus blackguard as you'd meet with in many a long day's march."

L'Estrange could restrain himself no longer. Jumping up, he exclaimed, excitedly—

"Excuse me, you fellows, but I think you are talking of some one I know. My name's L'Estrange, and Mrs. Wilson, of whom I think you are speaking, is a cousin of mine. I've just come back from Myndoonie, where I've been to look for her. Can any of you tell me where she and her husband are just now?"

He of the Police looked at him meditatively.

"Poor devil!" he remarked, under his breath.

"My friend, Mr. Dixon, can probably tell you as much as anyone," he continued, introducing the men.

It was not much that he could tell him, after all. Open competition for the Indian Civil takes the edge off the average man's intellect, while those who manage to get through become little more than machines.

Dickson related his tale as if it were an official return that he was compiling, the recital of which nearly drove L'Estrange frantic. Briefly it amounted to this.

The Wilsons had come out in October, and, as previously arranged, settled in Myndoonie. Here the husband had commenced to practice. Family influence, however, had soon induced him to relinquish this, and to adopt the more dignified course of living as a native of wealth and position—his father being of royal blood—on the work of others. Under this arrangement it naturally followed that his wife could not, for a moment, be permitted to carry out her plan of ministering to the native women. In her loneliness and heartache at her husband's neglect, and fast lessening affection, she had formed the acquaintance of an English officer, named Trevor.

George Wilson, meeting them together, on more than one occasion, became imbued with the idea that his wife was forming a *liaison*. With the blind unreasoning passion of an Oriental, his jealousy was aroused, and he applied to her, in Trevor's presence, an insulting epithet. The Englishman promptly knocked him down, and yielding to Mrs. Wilson's entreaties, left the house,

thinking no more about the matter. The next morning he was found in the roadway, a few yards from their bungalow, quite dead and horribly mutilated. Suspicion fell on Wilson, who stoutly denied any knowledge of the circumstances of Trevor's death. Shortly after he reassumed his native name, and left the district, taking his wife with him.

"Can you tell me where they are now?" asked L'Estrange, when the other had finished.

The policeman looked at him curiously.

"Oddly enough—a mere coincidence, perhaps," he answered, "but they're living at Patipur just now. I should tell you that he calls himself by his native names and titles now, so you must ask for Lal Mohammed Khan, when you enquire for him. You must excuse me," he added after a pause, "but he's not too fond of Englishmen, so it's as well to be cautious if you're not exactly on visiting terms."

"Thanks," replied L'Estrange stiffly. "I can look after myself, but I fancy that Lal Mohammed Khan and I will have a little account to settle before we're many hours older. Good-night."

The silent man—he was in the Public Works—who had not hitherto taken part in the conversation, now delivered himself—

"I rather think," he remarked solemnly, "that our highly esteemed friend, the trusty and well beloved Lal, Esquire, is going to get rather worse than he bargains for. I imagine, moreover, that it will not be L'Estrange who comes off second best. Lal Mohammed Khan deserves to be cowhided, and I have an idea that he will be, and very effectively too. Allah is great, and L'Estrange is his instrument. I have spoken. Good-night."

Out into the open air, under the silver beams of the great cold Indian moon, strode Francis L'Estrange, along the road to the village. His heart was full of passion against this man, who had ventured to treat his kindred thus. In his anger, he hardly knew what he intended to do. It was a ticklish thing to interfere with another man's domestic arrangements—especially a native's—but this was an exceptional case. He thought of the motto of his race—*Facta non verba*—and tightened his grasp on his hunting crop.

He found the house without much difficulty. It was not much use, he thought, enquiring whether anyone was at home or not; it was best to find out this sort of thing for oneself. Accordingly he

passed through the half opened door, and entered the drawing-room the lights in the window of which had led him, when outside, to conclude to be occupied. At first he thought the room was empty, but a woman's figure, her head buried in a sofa cushion, sitting under a lamp at the far end, showed him his mistake. As he stood in the doorway, uncertain whether to enter or not, the low sound of muffled sobbing decided him. At his approach the woman turned round, and looked up.

"Marion, is it really you?" L'Estrange cried, doubting the evidence of his senses. Could it be possible that this tear-stained, sad-eyed looking figure could be the beautiful, peerless Marion that he had known and loved in former days? God in Heaven! What a change!

"Francis! Francis! Have you come at last?" she wailed. "Has God listened to my prayers? Or is He still forgetful? Oh, Francis, dear, say that you will stay with me, and not let—that man—come back. Do you know what he threatens to do this evening? He is going to sell me to his uncle, and send me to Persia."

"How has this change taken place, Marion? I thought you were going to be so happy?"

"I made a mistake, and I have suffered ever since. Almost immediately after my marriage with that—that man—I will not call him husband—I have been the victim of his persecution. Sometimes I almost think he is mad. It all begun from his blind jealousy, and the unreasoning enmity of his relations, who had expected him to choose a wife among his own people. He has made me wear native clothes; he has destroyed all my books, and lets me neither write, nor receive letters. For over six months I have not seen a white woman, or heard a word of English. And, oh, Francis, I can hardly say it, but he used to beat me, because I couldn't learn the native language."

"The swine! He will have to settle with me for this," Francis exclaimed fiercely.

"Hush! For God's sake! I hear him coming. Do nothing rash!"

The next moment, George Wilson, M.D., now more generally known as Lal Mohammed Khan, entered the room. Marion shrunk involuntarily into a corner. It was pitiable to witness her abject terror of her husband. L'Estrange's blood boiled as he saw it.

A scowl spread over the native's dark face, already enflamed with passion, as he recognised his visitor.

"Ah!" he remarked significantly, "it is really very good of you to visit my wife during my absence. An English custom, I presume? Pray don't leave us because I'm here. Don't let my presence interfere with your enjoyment."

"No," said L'Estrange, shortly, "don't flatter yourself that it will. I have something to say to you, though, that you may not care to hear."

"Pray don't consult me," he replied, mockingly, "I wish, though, that you could speak Bengali. I am rather out of practice in your own charming tongue. My dear wife is really now quite proficient in the vernacular. By the way, on a previous occasion I once had the pleasure of hearing your candid opinion of myself. It was in English, just before our marriage."

"I daresay you know quite enough English, you oily tongued hound, to understand what I am going to say. First of all, I am going to take the hide off your miserable nigger's body, and then I am going to place my cousin under my protection."

"You amuse me, my dear sir. What an extraordinary taste you must have. Do you really think that you will benefit my wife, by making her your—it is not an occasion to mince matters—mistress? Do you contemplate establishing a harem, may I ask?"

With a roar like a tiger after his prey, L'Estrange rushed upon him. Knocking him down with a crashing blow on the jaw from his fist, he avenged the foul insult.

The native slowly picked himself up, his mouth full of blood, and spluttering from his broken teeth. An expression of devilish malignity settled on his features.

"Better that you had never been born, than that you had raised your hand to one of my race, and polluted him by such contact," he exclaimed. L'Estrange turned his back contemptuously on him, and walked across the room to Marion. With a stealthy cat-like tread the other followed him, a keen-edged tulwar, which he had taken from the wall, concealed behind him.

As L'Estrange bent over Marion's seat, he raised the weapon for a stroke. In another moment L'Estrange's head would have been severed from his body. As he approached, she, half turning in her chair, saw his uplifted arm.

GEORGE WILSON, M.D.

"My God! Francis," she called out, warningly. "Take care, he is going to strike you down!"

Francis turned round just in time. Catching Lal Mohammed by the throat he managed to snatch the weapon from his hand, but not before it had inflicted a severe wound on his shoulder.

With an imprecation of baffled rage, Wilson caught up the reading lamp from the table, and hurled it at his wife. As he did so, he caught his foot in the rug, and, falling against the table, in his efforts to recover his balance, split his head against the sharp edge. Insensible from the effects of his fall, he lay helpless on the floor. The blazing oil, which fortunately had not touched his wife, ran along the matting towards him.

L'Estrange seized her in his arms. The shock of the struggle had rendered her unconscious, thus making her easier for him to manage. He must act before the servants arrived. Quick as thought, he jumped through the open window, with Marion's helpless form in his arms, leaving his adversary to his fate.

* * * *

The cause of his death, and the burning to the ground of the house of Lal Mohammed Khan, was an inexplicable mystery to the neighbours of that gentleman for many a long day. A paragraph in the "Pioneer" from our own correspondent at Patipur was devoted to the case—

"We regret to announce," it ran, "the death of this well-known native gentleman, which occurred under circumstances of considerable mystery. It appears that his servants, on returning shortly after ten p.m. found the house in flames. The charred clothing of their master, which was recovered when the fire was subdued, is a mournful evidence of his untimely decease. It is thought that the outbreak was originated by some sparks from a firework display, which was being held by some children in a neighbouring compound

The mystery has been considerably added to by the fact, that neither the deceased gentleman's wife, nor an Englishman, who was seen by a *syce* to enter the house, have since been heard of. Lal Mohammed Khan was a gentleman of wide culture, and was a distinguished student of medicine, having obtained the degree of M.D. in England. His many good qualities, and charm of manner, endeared him to a large circle of friends, by whom his untimely death is sincerely mourned."

* * * *

The circumstances concerning these events were never cleared up. The enterprising *syce*, who declared that he saw an English sahib enter the house and a *bhusti*, who reported that shortly after midnight, he had been nearly run over by a cart containing two ferringhees (foreigners) subsequently made an affidavit that it was possible they were mistaken. A certain police official, who was staying at the *ddk* bungalow at the time, hinted very strongly that they would best consult their own interests by keeping quiet about the matter. Moreover, he gave them to understand, that, as representatrix of the Empress, he had very serious doubts as to whether he would not have to hang them, as it was, for it was quite evident that they knew more than they ought to. The terrified natives thereupon swore solemnly that they were under the influence of drink at the time of the alleged occurrences.

Gradually the whole subject ceased to occupy any attention. Tablets of brass, and monuments of stone, commemorated the esteem in which the departed was generally held. Other causes for interest arose, and at length the whole affair degenerated into mere bazaar *gup*. Certainly the three travellers in the *ddk* bungalow held their peace about it.

Even when, some three years afterwards, they dined at the house of a Mr. and Mrs L'Estrange, in Cadogan Gardens, they never intimated, by word or deed, that they had ever met their host under other circumstances.

News filtered slowly down into English country districts. When Francis L'Estrange wrote from Calcutta, to say that Marion's husband was dead, and that he was bringing her home, his mother asked no questions, but put it down to the "fatal climate." Even the marriage of Francis and Marion she approved of after a time, although she confided to her that she considered such haste "positively indecent." Marion's refusal to wear mourning for her first husband, was always a source of wonder to her, as well as her unreasoning prejudice to India. She used to remark plaintively, "dear Marion was always so peculiar, you know." However, as Francis didn't seem to mind, she wisely gave up troubling herself about it.

In the Hour of Death.

By WINSTON KENDRICK.

PART I.

PÈRE AUGUSTIN and his little pupil, Chrétien de Montmartre, were about to sit down to the enjoyment of their simple evening meal. The boy had just placed the chairs by the table, and was gazing longingly at the dish of fresh salad he had gathered in the garden half an hour before, and washed with his own hands at the pump in the back kitchen, whence now came the clatter of Jeanneton's sabots as she moved slowly about.

Something else issued from the kitchen too, the odour of excellent soup, and Chrétien was hungry, very hungry. The sun was setting, and its long golden rays lay across the supper table, throwing the loaf of brown bread into inviting prominence, and dancing upon the lettuce-leaves, till they twinkled roguishly at the child. He was just going to peep in the kitchen, when Jeanneton appeared at the door, carrying a bowl. She was a pleasant-faced woman in a short blue petticoat, with a linen kerchief crossed over her brown bodice.

"Now, Chrétien, thou mayst call the Curé, and then sit thee down, like a good lad," said she.

The boy went to the foot of the ladder-like staircase leading into the little chamber above.

"Mon père, mon père, supper is ready," he called softly.

Père Augustin was occupied with his breviary, but he closed it at the sound of the young voice, and climbed down the rickety stair. Little Chrétien stood with folded hands behind his chair, while the priest asked a blessing upon the food before them, and then with a good will, the pair of friends fell to.

Jeanneton had taken her knitting to the porch, and the cottage was very quiet. The window of the little parlour stood wide open, and across the fields came the lilt of some peasant's song as he went cheerily homewards. Young birds were chattering in their nests in the great tree that flung its shadow across the flagged pathway. The daisies that Chrétien loved were closing their yellow eyes, and the scent of the May-blossom by the gate was heavy and sweet on

the air. Across the sky long shafts of crimson spread, and melted into golden islands above the west. The sun was giving one last look into the Curé's little room, and he lingered lovingly about the white bent head of the old man, casting a halo round his snowy locks. Then he kissed Chrétien's forehead, and went trembling away. The shadows grew longer and deeper, as night with dark fingers drew a purple pall over the heavens, and still there came no jarring sound to disturb the hushed solemnity that shrouded the declining day.

Père Augustin bared his head, and with thankful heart murmured a few brief words of praise for the peace and beauty of the evening hour.

It was an hour dear to both tutor and pupil, when the soul of each drew closer to the other, and when he who stood nearest to the river of death, pointed out more clearly the glories of the eternal land beyond its rolling stream. Here, hand-in-hand with the bright-faced lad, who, filled with the ardour of youth, pressed forward hopefully upon the road of life that his own feet had trod, the priest, while realizing the weakness and imperfections of humanity as the child could not, poured into his listening ears tenderest sympathy and counsel.

"See, mon père," cried Chrétien, gazing upwards in the dusk.

"There comes the first star! And look—another! Angel's eyes, are they not?"

"Aye, watching thee, my son. Be sure they never watch in vain. Look up to them always, believing that the good God sets them above thy path to keep thy feet from falling."

"Even when it is dark?"

"The more when it is dark, for then thou needst them most."

"But when the clouds are heavy, mon père?"

"His Angels always wait around His Throne. They are there, ready to come to thine aid, at His bidding, though thou mayest not see them. But Faith's eye can pierce the darkest cloud."

"Could *thine*, my father? Thou hast often told me that thou hast never known any great trial or temptation. If tested thus, dost think that thou wouldst fall?"

"Le bon Dieu be mine aid! I thank Him that hitherto I have been so blest, and should the hour of trial come, I trust *His* strength, not mine."

From the far distance the rumble of wheels now made itself heard, accompanied by the sound of horses' feet; a carriage was approach-

ing, and at a rapid pace. At first neither the old man nor the boy had noticed its advent, absorbed as they were in their talk, but now Chrétien put up a hand to his ear, and sprang to the window.

"A carriage and pair! They come this way. Mon père, can it be for thee?"

"Probably not, my son. The château of the Comte de Vocquesville is but two leagues on. The Comte keeps more carriage company than we."

"But the driver is slackening speed! He is turning down the lane. I can see the lamps, 'tis a grand carriage and pair, and a gentleman descends,—he is entering the garden."

"Stand back, my son. Do not let him see thee staring. Perhaps he needs but to ask his way."

But such was evidently not the stranger's intention. He rapped loudly on the door, and Jeanneton, who had returned to her duties, and was busy at the back of the house, now clattered along the passage. Her deaf old ears had heard no sound of wheels, and she peered up at the visitor, amazed. He stated that his business was with her master, and she flung open the parlour door accordingly.

"M. le Curé, you are wanted."

"Entrez, m'sieu," cried the priest cordially. "You are welcome. Stay, Jeanneton, we need the lamp."

"I am lighting it," replied the woman gruffly. "'Tis a late hour for callers, but the house of the prêtre must needs be open to all," she added mutteringly, for she rightly guessed that this would prove a summons for Père Augustin that he would not fail to obey; and as he rarely thought of himself, or his own comfort, and spent many a night out of his bed to sit beside that of a sick parishioner, it behoved her, she felt, to add no influence that would weigh the scale upon the side of duty. When she had finished her grumbling monologue, which the priest ignored with a mildly reproachful air, and the visitor with contempt, she clattered out of the room again, leaving the supper-table untouched, though she would fain have swept all the dishes off with her. A glance from the Curé however, compelled her to relinquish the intention.

"Pray be seated, sir. And what may I offer you? I trust you will partake of my humble fare. Jeanneton will warm some more soup directly." But the stranger stayed his host's kindly hospitality with a gesture.

"Do not trouble. Time is of importance, like my errand, though *that* need not take long to explain. First—the child I saw here—?" He glanced round the room in search of Chrétien, whom his quick eyes had immediately observed. But the boy had slipped away.

"My ward and pupil, Chrétien de Montmartre, the son of a friend, now, alas, dead. He has left us, knowing it is my wish that ~~the~~ should do so when I am engaged. You may speak freely, sir."

Thus reassured, the visitor loosened the wrapper, which, although it was not a chilly night, he wore closely confining his throat and mouth, and began to speak in a slightly halting accent.

"I come, M. le Curé, some distance, from one who stands in need of ghostly counsel. He is dying. His hours are numbered, and for reasons which I am not at liberty to give, but which he will no doubt explain to you as his confessor, should you undertake that office, I am here to beg you to come to him with all possible speed. Do not hesitate, or it may be too late. Think—a dying man, a soul in distress, claims your sympathy, your help, in his last awful moments. Of your charity, do not deny it."

Père Augustin was not the man to whom such an appeal could be made in vain. His kindly eyes glistened sorrowfully. He put out his hand, and laid it upon the stranger's arm.

"May the Master I serve, deny me mercy in my hour of agony if I neglect the call of a brother now. I come, sir, most willingly, but may I not ask whither?"

"I will tell you when we have started. See," and grasping the Curé's hand, his visitor pointed through the window.

"In that carriage sits one impatient of delay,—the dying man's son. And what think you he must feel, counting the moments that pass, and not knowing if his father yet lives or no?"

"Enough—you have said more than enough, my good sir, I will come at once. Give me but time to obtain such things as I must bring with me, and to say adieu to my adopted child, and I am at your service."

"Be it so," said the stranger. "I will await you, M. le Curé, in the carriage, but hasten your movements, I beg."

Thus adjured, Père Augustin ascended to the sleeping chamber above, which Chrétien shared with him. Here he found the boy, and in a few words told him the object of the stranger's visit. To his surprise Chrétien clung round his neck, and burst into tears.

"Do not go, do not go, mon père, I beseech thee, do not go with the man!"

"Why Chrétien, my son, wouldst have me an unfaithful shepherd of the sheep? I *must* go. There is no doubt about the matter. Thou and Jeanneton must take care of each other till I return. 'Tis but for a night, my son. I shall be with thee in the morning."

"My father, forgive me," exclaimed the boy, "I am but a coward for thy sake. But my heart fails me, for thou knowest I have only thee."

He leant his fair head against Père Augustin's shoulder, and caught his breath, striving to check the sobs that broke forth in girlish fashion, till he was forced to bury his quivering mouth in the priest's sleeve. The good Père held him closely, touched to the heart by this unusual display of emotion.

"Come, this will not do. We are soldiers of the cross, thou and I, Chrétien, and we go where duty calls—to death, if need be. But we are not alone, else could I not leave thee. Cheer up, my son. Thou dost make a large matter out of a small one this time. For what is it, when all's said? Merely a summons to attend a dying stranger with the rites of Holy Church, that otherwise might be denied him. His emissaries are no brigands, come to carry me off. I shall be as safe with them as here in my own little bed beside thine. Wipe thy face, then, my son, and let me see a smile, before I go."

Bravely the lad struggled to comply, occupying himself in packing Père Augustin's vestments, and the miniature service he used for administering the last sacraments, into a little valise which the priest could easily carry in his hand. In five minutes all was ready. The horses were stirring restlessly below. The stranger was leaning upon the little gate. Chrétien could distinguish the outline of his dark form, and the boy shuddered involuntarily as he did so.

The lane lay in shadow, save for the glimmer of the carriage-lamps, but high up in the sky the pale crescent of the moon shone white and clear above the dusky forest that bound the horizon. Many a strange story had Chrétien listened to, told by the peasants of the neighbourhood of the wonders of that forest. In connection with it, gnomes and spirits, gipsies, elves, and bad men were inextricably mingled in his mind. Awful things had occurred at times within the remembrance of the villagers. Robberies, murders, and

other atrocities were attributed to the dwellers in the forest, whom no man dared brave, and whom it was reported no man ever saw, with the power of recognising them,—until too late,—to be what they were, banditti of the fiercest, most ruthless description. Occasionally these bad men ventured forth, bent on plunder, and woe be to the harmless peasant they encountered. He was known by his comrades no more, or if he returned amongst them it was to give utterance to tales garbled to such a magnitude of horror, that the credulous hearts of the simple villagers were vested with increased dread of the unknown band.

Brought up in an atmosphere of sentiment and superstition, it was impossible for Chrétien to remain unaffected by such stories, and doubtless the remembrance of them preyed unconsciously upon his mind. But he was a manly little fellow notwithstanding, and had too great a regard for Père Augustin's calling, and too sensible an appreciation of its exigencies, to permit his own foolish doubts and fears to escape him further. After all, who knew for a fact, that there really were any banditti? Père Augustin himself had often declared that there could be none. They lived in comparatively peaceful times, as the good Père often said, in recounting the terrors of the devastating sword of civil war that had swept the country in his boyhood, leaving many a fair home desolate. But now, the land was tranquil, and the power that had preserved them hitherto would protect Père Augustin to-night.

So Chrétien lifted a brave face for his friend's kiss, and parting blessing, and having watched him safely down the stair, he knelt down by the window. Père Augustin meanwhile called Jeanneton, and whispered a few words to her.

"Go up to Chrétien presently," said he. "The boy is not well. I think he has an attack of migraine. Give him one of your magic potions, Jeanneton, and take care of him till I come again."

"Aye, M. le Curé, that I will. God send it may be soon," quoth she.

"Amen," responded the priest, as he hurried to the gate. The unusual circumstance of his departure had not till then roused any uneasiness in his guileless breast, but now for the first time, a faint qualm struggled within him. The old woman's last words, intended as a benison, sounded rather like an ill omen.

The dark-cloaked stranger waited with his hand upon the carriage-

door, and motioning Père Augustin to enter, himself sprang after him immediately. Someone else was seated inside, who bowed silently in response to the Curé's diffident greeting. The horses dashed forward, impelled by a ready whip, and emerging from the lane, the carriage rolled out upon the high road, soon leaving the village far behind. Upon the right stretched miles of pasture land, with here and there a solitary cottage, in which, however, the lights were extinguished, for the inhabitants kept early hours. To the left, copse and field flitted past, and far ahead, loomed the dark forest.

For some minutes the Curé waited for the explanation that he had been promised; then turning to the man who sat beside him, he gently inquired whether the journey would be a long one. His companion leaned forward suddenly as if to reply, and with great rapidity passed something soft and dark before the Curé's eyes. Instantly the unfortunate priest realized that he was blindfolded, and that the bandage was securely fastened behind his head. At the same moment the man seated opposite him deftly fitted a pair of straps round the Curé's wrists, and he knew that he was a prisoner.

"Give no alarm," hissed the man at his side. "You are powerless, and can do nothing. Keep quiet, and you shall have nothing to fear."

"I am in God's hands, as well as yours," responded the poor priest meekly. "Rest assured that I would not willingly endanger my own safety. But may I not speak?"

"Say on," replied he who had entered the cottage, and who seemed the only one likely to conduct any conversation, "but we do not promise to answer you."

"I am a servant of the Church, and as such I come to give the aid you asked me. It ill beseems anyone so to treat a Minister of God, and on such an errand—or was your tale a lie? I am a poor man. If your intention, or that of your colleagues, be robbery, the booty will be small. My good name, and the poor child at home, are all I have. Never to my knowledge have I done evil to any—living or dead. This can surely be no plan of vengeance, for in my life there is nothing to revenge."

"It is not vengeance," replied the dark-cloaked stranger, "nor is it robbery. Nor is the tale I told you false. Be satisfied. Your aid is needed by a dying man. But it is not the will of those who

desire your presence that you should meanwhile be free. Your eyes, your limbs, your lips even, must be guarded. Now rest, and sleep if you can, for there is much before you."

Sorely puzzled, and in deep distress of mind, but wisely deeming it folly to offer any opposition, Père Augustin remained quiescent, but to sleep was impossible. He could no longer see the shadows of the trees, but by the sound of the horses' feet he knew that the carriage had left the hard high road, for one of the softer ones near the borders of the forest. Presently a gradual descent was perceptible, and this by degrees increased. The road seemed to be taking a circular bend. Suddenly the horses were pulled up almost on their haunches, and the good Père was jerked forward in his seat. He felt his neighbour's hand upon his face.

"Make no sign. I must gag you," whispered the stranger.

"I assure you that is unnecessary," protested the priest. "I give you my word, I will not speak without permission."

The other gave a low, cynical laugh.

"M. le Curé, I have a profound respect for you, but I have not, as yet, had any opportunity of testing the truth of your word. Allow me."

The next instant the gag was forced into Père Augustin's mouth.

PART II.

A MURMURED colloquy was passing between the driver and some men outside. These were evidently armed, for Père Augustin could hear the subdued movements of their accoutrements. Then the carriage rolled slowly on, still going down-hill, and describing, as it appeared, circle after circle.

The time that was passing seemed interminable to the priest. Stout-hearted by nature, and too genuine himself to entertain suspicion, he yet could not help recalling poor little Chrétien's strange forebodings. What if he were indeed about to be murdered? But why? Why? The question resolved itself into a torturing doubt. Each moment he felt the drops of sweat rising upon his forehead, the beating of his pulses becoming more sickeningly distinct and frequent.

At length, when it seemed as though he could not endure the suspense for a moment longer, the carriage stopped again, and his companions got out, and assisted him to alight.

"Take our hands," said the spokesman, peremptorily, and between them they led him along.

Père Augustin could feel that he was walking upon softly carpeted floors in a space that was both warmed, and well lighted. A wave of murmur reached him, and died away. He descended two or three steps, with his captors, who then relinquished his hands, and pushed him slightly before them. A voice, deep but not unpleasant, called out,

"Good! Remove the gag and bandages."

This was done, and when Père Augustin's eyes became accustomed to the glare that met him, he found himself within a large, oval chamber, presumably hewn from the bowels of the earth. Natural rock pillars supported the roof of rough hewn stone, but the ground was strewn with rugs. At the further end of the room was a raised wooden dais, upon which was arranged a semicircle of men, thirteen in number, as Père Augustin ascertained when he had sufficient presence of mind to count them. At least two hundred more were seated about the room in various attitudes betokening attention and interest. All were armed with short swords and pistols, and all wore long dark cloaks, such as those of the two who now stood on either side of the priest, a little to the rear.

The central figure of the group upon the dais was a man of commanding aspect, with keen eyes and undaunted mien. He flung back his cloak, and, stepping forward, bowed low to the astonished priest.

"M. le Curé, of Roisineau, doubtless you wonder for what cause you are brought here, and in this manner. A few words will tell you all you need to know. We are met here as judges, and before our just tribunal a man has been condemned to die. A man who is guilty of a crime for which France has no law, and metes no punishment. But as France would let the sinner pass unscathed, we, her sons, to whom her honour is dear, requite her wrongs, and thus fulfil the noble, but thankless task of retributive justice. Yet, as we would not deprive any man of the consolation his religion may offer, we have desired your presence here to-night, that you may give the criminal that assistance your Church vouchsafes through you."

Here the speaker paused, evidently expecting Père Augustin to express his willingness in the matter, but the good Père was too completely dumbfounded by the turn events had taken to be able to utter a word, so the other continued—

“The condemned man awaits you now in his cell. You will be conducted to him. Half an hour will be permitted you to remain together, alone, but of course guarded. At the end of that time, you can witness the execution should you so desire. No?” as the priest shuddered—“Well, perhaps you will wish otherwise.”

“After it is over, however, you will be safely escorted back to Roisineau in the same manner in which you came. Guard, fall in.”

The last words were spoken sharply, in a different tone and manner, and they startled the good Père considerably, more especially as a score of armed men sprang to their feet, from amongst the company, and formed themselves three deep, round him.

One of his previous captors had slipped his valise into his hand, and thus, led by the flare of oil-lamps fixed into rough niches in the wall, the little party moved off down a long narrow passage. To Père Augustin, it seemed as though he were walking in a dream. It could not be that he, the simple-minded Curé of Roisineau, into whose placid life nothing strange nor stirring had ever come, could really be taking part in these extraordinary proceedings. But if he found them so, what must they be to the man who was even now prepared to meet him, and who was expecting to receive his death at the hands of these lawless avengers? Would it not be Père Augustin's duty to attempt his rescue, to strike a blow—if even a feeble one, on his behalf? And yet, how powerless he was! What could he do, one poor old man, alone, and unarmed, against two hundred reckless desperadoes? He shivered at the thought. But he could not consider them wholly lost to all considerations of honour.

The very speech that had been made to him by their ringleader upheld it. In their conduct to himself he could complain of no unnecessarily harsh treatment—scarcely of discourtesy. True, they had resorted to stratagem to ensure his presence, but how else could they have obtained it? And the motive that made their desire all-compelling, softened their conduct in the good Père's eyes. At least, they would hasten no guilty soul into eternity unshriven.

His thoughts were brought to an abrupt termination by the pause

of his escort before a narrow opening in the rocky wall, where a heavy oaken door swung on stout hinges. Four men with fixed bayonets guarded it. One of these inserted a key, which ground slowly in the lock; he then pushed open the door, signing to Père Augustin to enter. For an instant the latter hesitated, not knowing whom, or what reception, he might meet with. Then with calm exterior, he complied. The oak door closed behind him with a sullen sound that seemed to echo through him. What if he should never come out again alive? He stood half dazed, and momentarily sick with apprehension, before he became aware of a figure crouched beside an aperture in the wall beyond. It was motionless when the Curé's glance first fell upon it, but when, impelled by pity and by curiosity, he took a step forward, the figure stirred, raising a face that showed ghastly beneath the yellow glare of an oil-lamp above. Then the prisoner laughed, a hollow, weary laugh.

"Come nearer—do not be afraid! I cannot hurt you."

With an effort he lifted his arms. Heavy chains bound them to the brick-work that formed part of the wall behind him, into which strong iron staples were fastened. He struggled to his feet—they too were chained.

"You are safe—or you would not be admitted here alone. I am secured to my grave, see, that I may indulge in contemplation of it. A pretty place—is it not?"

Shocked and amazed, the Curé drew closer. The aperture behind the prisoner was wide enough, and just high enough, to permit an average-sized man to stand within its limits. Père Augustin glanced from it to the wretched creature before him, and measured his height with a glance.

"This is—for you?"

"Aye, M. le Curé—for your humble servant. A meet reward for my deeds, I am told. Perhaps it is so. You will judge better when you have heard all. In any case the realization cannot be much worse than the anticipation. I have been here a night and a day, and I feel that I have known—*Hell*."

"You look as though you might have been here years."

"Aye, years of suffering can be compressed into moments, and I have lived them. But come, M. le Curé, time passes, and I know that mine is short. I have lived a villain. Help me not to die a coward."

Père Augustin glanced round for something that should serve as table and chair. These, of the roughest description were at hand, and he made his preparations in silence, for his heart was hot within him, and he feared to make matters worse for the condemned man by giving utterance to sympathy that should prove ill-advised. However vile and evil the culprit's life might have been, however great the wrongs he had committed, it seemed to Père Augustin that no offence could merit such a punishment. But whether deserved or not, certain it was that the Curé could not avert it, though its horrors he might be able in part to assuage.

"Kneel down, my son, I am ready," and the criminal crept humbly to his side, and knelt, softened as the hardest are within the immediate presence of the dreadful majesty of Death.

* * * *

Meanwhile the guard paced to and fro outside, and talked in low tones.

"A brave old fellow he! Didst note how he took his courage in his hands and never faltered? He'll not flinch!"

"Not for another, but the bravest of us are cowards when our own turn comes."

"Tush! Man alive, I tell thee there was a look in his eyes that would shame Satan."

"Meaning *Le Capitaine*? May he see it then, for to my mind 'tis a dirty trick he means to play, and may cost more than he expects"

"Thou art a fool for thine opinion, *Bronchard*," broke in a black-browed man scornfully, "How can we let him go, thinkest thou, and leave ourselves at his mercy? *Le Capitaine* does not spill needless blood for pleasure."

"He had best take care then that he spills no drop of honest blood that never wrought harm to any. 'Twould be a blot upon *Le Cercle* that centuries could not efface."

Thus they talked, and the minutes sped on, all too swiftly for the two they guarded. The allotted time at length was over.

Slowly, and half reluctantly, the chief of the guard unlocked the door, which moved back heavily once more upon its hinges.

"*M. le Curé*! Time is up," he called, and waited for the priest to issue from the chamber. Père Augustin came forward.

"Present my compliments to your"—he paused for an appropriate title.

"Le Capitaine? Oui, M'sieu—"

"Just so. To M. le Capitaine, and tell him I would avail myself of his promised permission to attend the execution."

The man he addressed saluted in silence, and wheeling round, walked briskly down the passage.

In a few minutes it was thronged with the rest of the band, the man they called Le Capitaine at their head.

"So, M. le Curé, you have changed your mind," he said, looking severely at Père Augustin with knitted forehead.

"By your leave, sir," replied the priest quietly. "The condemned man begs I shall remain, and in accordance with your expressed permission, I have ventured to promise that I will do so."

"So be it. Take your place there," thundered Le Capitaine pointing to a position as near as possible to the opening in the wall, and Père Augustin, with gentle dignity, moved towards the spot indicated.

Every detail of the scene that followed stirred his spirit to its depths. Every fibre within him cried out against the unaccustomed ordeal which he now witnessed; but more than ordinary strength was his, to comfort and uphold the miserable wretch beside him. If the means of grace of which he was permitted to be the imperfect medium were vouchsafed by his presence, how might he dare withhold it? Thus he reasoned, striving to quench the soul-sickness that from moment to moment threatened to overmaster him.

The story to which he had listened, poured forth in all its terrible details of outrage and crime, perpetrated not indeed against the narrow code of the republican laws, but against the souls and good name of fellow beings, had left its mark upon his face, on which horror was now so strangely blent with pity.

Although he was not here as judge, and in the awful scene at which he was present, his sympathies were deeply stirred by the agony of the condemned man, he realized keenly how just, though how lawless, was the vengeance meted out. The sufferer bore himself bravely, though the sweat that stood thickly upon his brow when he was removed, and placed in an upright posture within the wall, spoke plainly of his distress. His anguished glance sought that of Père Augustin continually, as in a clear voice the Curé repeated the last prayers for the dying.

It was all over in an incredibly short space of time, and the poor

old prêtre, feeling weak and ill now that the active strain had ceased, was escorted back to the Council-chamber by Le Capitaine himself. Here a cup of brandy was held to his lips, for he bid fair to faint away. Soon however a slight flush of colour returned to his aged cheeks, and eager to leave the place as soon as possible, he begged to be allowed to depart.

"Not so fast, M. le Curé," remarked the Captain with a slow enigmatical smile. "Our interview is not yet ended. I have now to trouble you to inform the Council and myself, of the full substance of all you recently heard from the lips of the man whom you saw immured."

"Of what was told me under the Seal of the Confessional? You ask what is impossible, sir," replied Père Augustin, with some haughtiness.

"It may appear so at first. Nevertheless, the choice is before you. Comply,—or"—he glanced significantly to the rear of the priest.

Père Augustin looked round. A dozen men of the guard were drawn up in line, within a few yards, their pistols levelled at—himself.

For an instant his mental balance wavered. The shock was severe. He knew now that his own life was at stake. Then summoning all the courage he possessed, and with one swift cry to Heaven for aid, he turned round again, holding out his trembling hands.

"M. le Capitaine, I have done you no injury. The man upon whom your vengeance has fallen was a sinner. I do not say that he did not deserve the death-punishment, though a more humane form of administration would have been more worthy of your clemency. But I—what have I done? I came here at your request, and have fulfilled your desire. Let me go in peace."

"That might not be unreasonable, save for a point in the matter which you have not considered. We are aware, of course, of the outline of the crimes for which the deceased (for I may safely call him so) has met his punishment, but *of the details of those crimes* we are ignorant. It is necessary that we should know them. We can obtain them from no man but yourself. You will understand therefore that you must give them to us."

"I regret deeply that you should have asked me a thing which it is not in my power to grant. This is against my religion. The Confessional is sacred, and what is confided under its Seal, may never be divulged."

"In this case it must be, or you know the alternative."

Père Augustin's shaking hands clutched each other firmly. Then he held his old white head very upright, and straightened his bent figure.

"I am ready to die, since it must be so," he said. "I crave only one thing. A short time—a few moments only, to commit my soul to God. There is none to pray for *me* or to be with *me* at the last. Do not deny me this one consolation."

"You shall have it—for how long? Ten minutes? Yes, that will suffice. Guard! march the prisoner back to the execution vault."

And thus, Père Augustin once more wearily retraced his steps, all hope dead within him. He had seen too much, to expect mercy for himself now.

Crushed by all that he had gone through, weakened by the fatigue of his journey, and the terrible events of the last hour, he had great difficulty in maintaining his strength sufficiently to walk steadily along the passage, and once he stumbled, and would have fallen but for the arm of one of the guard, who supported him, not unkindly, through the doorway, and placed him upon the rough seat within, where he had sat to hear the now immured man's confession. Not a sound came from the wall; the bricks were too thick. The guard withdrew and closed the door, leaving Père Augustin to his own thoughts.

It was a desolate spot, and the sense of loneliness speedily became oppressive. Fearing lest he should go mad, the unfortunate priest cast himself upon his knees, imploring Providence to come to his aid. The fervent simplicity of his faith helped him now. As a drowning man, swept onward by the current, seeing no chance of rescue, with nought but death below, and Heaven opening above him, he gave himself up to considerations of eternity. The past mattered little; in his guileless life there was no room for remorse, for he needed to make peace with none,—save God alone, and at the appointed time he rose, strengthened, and refreshed.

The thought of Chrétien had indeed overbrimmed his bitter cup, but for him too the good Père had faith, that the Father of the fatherless would be with him still. His chief prayer for the child was that he might never know the awful fate that had overtaken his benefactor.

Once more the armed band filed silently into the long narrow

room, and ranged themselves in order, nearly filling it with their numbers. Le Capitaine entered, and before them all, once again asked Père Augustin his decision.

"Remember we wage not war with such as you," said the Commander, throwing some persuasive kindness into his voice, as he gravely regarded the meek, white-haired, old man before him. "You are a good man, and we seek not your death. Give us the information we desire, and you shall go free. Remember, too, that by doing so you can cause no harm to the dead man. He has passed beyond our reach, and is safe enough."

"As I soon shall be! No, M. Le Capataine, I were unworthy of Him whose humble servitor I have striven to be for nigh on seventy years were I to prove faithless now. I am ready. In mercy then shoot me, but let me face my murderers."

He held up his arms, and walking backwards, was about to place himself against the wall, in readiness for the final volley, when his foot stumbled against some loose bricks upon the floor, and turning to step out of the way, he perceived that another aperture, similar to the one he had before seen, was now freshly made, and yawned before him, while a large heap of bricks with which to close it, lay near.

He fell back a pace or two, the full horror of the situation striking him in all its intensity.

PART III.

A low, mocking laugh broke the stillness.

"Ah! M. le Curé, perhaps now you will awake to wisdom. You see your goal before you. It may prove more conducive to enable you to change your mind, than the pistols of these good comrades of mine here. After due consideration, we have come to the conclusion that shooting would be too abrupt a termination to a life like yours. Perhaps after a week of solitary confinement, you may wish that you had been less obdurate, but then it will be too late. Let me urge you therefore while there is time,"—but for once the Curé broke in hoarsely,

"Peace! peace! I beg of you—*be quick*."

At a sign from their leader a party of the men stepped forward, and assisted the half-fainting Curé to enter the niche. Then they

began building up the bricks about his feet, some of them stooping continually to hide the varying expressions of wonder and commiseration that crossed their hard faces.

Père Augustin implored them to hasten their work.

"Quick, quick, I beseech you," he exclaimed from time to time, "but do it thoroughly. Do the work thoroughly. Leave no chinks between, where air or daylight may come through. So shall all more speedily be overpast."

The men acquiesced with low monosyllabic grunts. Le Capitaine looked on well pleased. Presently, when the brick-work mounted to Père Augustin's shoulders, and only they, and the old man's white head were visible, he stepped forward and delayed the workmen with a gesture.

"Man," he said, and in his voice was a curious ring, that sounded like triumph, "Life is sweet. Will you have no more of it?"

But Père Augustin did not hear him. In spirit he was away in the little Chapel at Roisineau. It was evening-tide upon Saint Augustin's day,—his patron saint. The Père was kneeling before the small shrine bright with flowers and tapers. Incense was rising, and with it little Chrétien's voice, a high sweet treble. He was taking as a solo the first four lines of each verse of a favourite short metrical litany to the Saint, the congregation joining in with the rest. To-night Père Augustin knew that the gates of Heaven were opening, while ten thousand thousand of the redeemed were welcoming the music that rose from the Chapel of Roisineau, and the old priest's quavering tones were suddenly lifted in rapture, startling the throng of men who were waiting in the vault to see the conclusion of the tragedy:

"Aux faux honneurs, aux vanités du monde,
 "Nous avons dit un eternal adieu :
 "Soutiens nos cœurs, rends notre foi féconde
 "O Saint Docteur de l'Eglise de Dieu."

There was a pause while Père Augustin again listened in fancy to his dear child's voice, and then again joined in the melody he alone could hear.

"Le monde en vain nous offrira ses charmes :
 "D'être a Jesus, nous avons fait le vœu ;
 "Pour triompher, ah ! donne-nous des armes,
 "O Saint Docteur de l'Eglise de Dieu."

The crowd was motionless. None could speak or move. The lamps flickered on the strange scene, casting grotesque shadows on the men's rough faces, but on that of Père Augustin shone a glow that seemed a reflexion of transcendental beauty from another world.

The men gazed upwards, awed, and wondering, and now clear as a bell, rang out unfalteringly the last few lines of the litany.

" Lorsque pour nous la dernière des heures

" Aura sonné . . . Sur tes ailes de feu

" Porte notre âmes aux célestes demeures,

" O Saint Docteur de l'Eglise de Dieu."

The silence that followed lasted for a long minute. Then Le Capitaine stepped back, gruffly bidding the men continue their work. Père Augustin still stood with the glory of that dream of Heaven radiating his pale features. It was a look that forbade further speech with him, and it remained undisturbed till the bricks hid him completely from sight.

* * * *

Inside his narrow prison Père Augustin was scarcely conscious of the passing of the moments. Already his feet were swept by the sluggish stream that men call death. But although the physical darkness might be felt around him, his soul was uplifted upon wings that seemed poised in mid-air, ready to bear him away, far from cruelty, and wrong and suffering, to the land of peace and rest. His senses were steeped in music. Chrétien's voice had ceased, but exquisite breathings of melodies he never yet had heard, fell soothingly around him, until across them came a clear sound, difficult to define, that he construed into the ringing of those golden harps of which he had been dreaming. High above him, as it seemed, appeared a white speck, faint and small, but increasing every moment. It widened and deepened into a glow of light, such light as he had never thought to see again. Could it be from Heaven? There followed a rushing sound as of angelic wings, and with one sobbing prayer,

" Seigneur ! Je viens ! Ne me rejetez pas de Votre Presence," the brave spirit of the good old man failed him, and he sank exhausted, just as kind strong arms lifted him gently through the opening in the wall.

* * * *

" M le Curé, you are an honourable man, one upon whose simple word I would now stake my life, and all that I hold dear. Had you

attempted to buy your own, at the price offered you, I should have been powerless to save you, for my men would have pulled you down, and killed you as they would a treacherous hound, and I could only have deemed the action wise. By this test alone could we judge of your truth and good faith, and right nobly have you borne it. Now we know that the events of this night are safe in your keeping. You are free to go where you choose. My carriage awaits you."

So spoke Le Capitaine, with considerable deference, as he held out his hand to the Curé, who at first hesitated to take it.

"Do not refuse," pleaded the other, "I have as high a sense of honour as yourself. The scoundrel whom you were called to visit, as you know, deserved death, and he was not without warning. He knew us, and the reward he would meet with. His baseness deserved none less. But thanks to you, I have learnt how a good man, too, can die, and it is a lesson I shall not forget."

"One moment, M. le Capitaine. What I refused to divulge last night, I of course shall continue to keep secret. But if, at any time my evidence regarding you and your band is required, I shall consider myself at liberty to give it fully. I cannot report you to the police as matters stand, because my knowledge of you and your affairs is limited to what my own eyes have seen, as although the deceased man told me his name, and the circumstances of his connection with you, I am, of course, debarred from mentioning any information so given."

"I am aware that *you*, at least, would not take advantage of it," returned the other, with a profound bow. "For the rest, I am in your hands. But your knowledge, as you say, is small, and to keep it so I must request you to consent to return as you came. It is not much, I think, to ask, under the circumstances, as it will prevent your obtaining any undesirable insight into matters which we may not wish you to know, and which your conscience may not bind you to keep secret,—as for instance, the exact location of our headquarters."

The Captain smiled, but it was evident that he meant what he said.

"I have no choice but to agree," said the Curé."

After partaking of some refreshment, which the Le Capitaine insisted upon proffering, and which Père Augustin did not like to refuse, he was relieved to find himself once again seated in the carriage, although bound and blindfolded as before, and with his two former companions, who still maintained an uncompromising silence.

- Arrived near the village of Roisineau, they once more removed the bandages, and with supreme thankfulness Père Augustin looked out of the window, and noted the blue of the sky, and the fresh green of the pasture-fields.

It seemed years since he had been here—a lifetime. Was it only yesterday that he had visited a young mother at that cottage? Only yesterday that he had chided some children for ruthless birds-nesting in that wood?

The early beams of the sun were tinging all the country-side with gold, and making it beautiful. A lark sprang up out of the dewy grass, carrying a joyous song with it. Tears rushed into Père Augustin's eyes, and he laid a silent thanksgiving upon the little bird's outspread wings.

They had stopped at his own gate now. His companions shook hands with him civilly, and one muttered a few words that might have been taken for an apology, but Père Augustin scarcely heard him. He was at home again, and with no thought but for that, he turned up the little path, between the rows of tall daisies, that were just unfolding their petals.

The house-door was shut. It was too early for Jeanneton to be about yet, but the old woman was not afraid of burglars, and she had left the bar down, thinking the Curé might return, so he lifted the latch and went in. The sun shone brilliantly into the little kitchen as he set the window open. It seemed to him that he must set everything open to-day, to let in God's sweet air and sunshine. He could hear Jeanneton stirring overhead. Then, very quietly he climbed the rickety stair to his own sleeping chamber.

Chrétien lay with his face to the door, as though he had gone to sleep in the hope of expectancy. Père Augustin stooped over him. The boy's cheek was wet as he touched it. He was a light sleeper, and woke suddenly, flinging up his arms round his friend's neck, half dazed with drowsiness, and joy.

"Mon père, mon père! Le bon Dieu be praised! Safe! Safe home again at last."

"Aye, my son," replied Père Augustin, tenderly, as he returned his caresses, adding softly, "If the Lord had not helped me, it had not failed but my soul had been put to silence."

Signs and Cognisances.

By R. M. LOCKHART.

WHATEVER may be thought of the value of heraldic devices and mottoes in the present day, it cannot be denied that the arms and legends of the leaders of men had an incalculable influence in the past. In the higher and more ancient houses the insignia were often full of a noble meaning that had its reference to the loftiest aims and ambitions; and the humblest representative of those whose powers or whose wisdom had gained for them such a recognition were often confirmed in such loyalty or personal virtue as they possessed by the thought of the origin of the arms. And to deny this, much of value, even in our own day, to what is now called heraldry, is to contradict the evident facts that men are concerned to keep up the honour of their families, and that they are expected to be, at least in some degree, examples of nobility even when no special claim is advanced for anything like hereditary honours,

It has long been a matter of dispute amongst antiquaries from what period the adoption of armorial bearings is to be dated. Some of the more zealous illustrators of the *arte of armorye* would carry it back to the heroic ages, because Achilles and Æneas are represented to have borne some device upon their shields. By more than one writer, the hieroglyphs of the heralds are deduced from those of ancient Egypt; while others see their origin in the symbols borne by commanders of all ages on their banners. The Scottish writer on the subject, Sir George Mackenzie, attributes their invention to the patriarch Jacob; but Gwillim assigns this honour to Alexander the Great. The most curious disquisition on the subject, however, is the *Treatise on Armorye* of the learned Prioress of Sopewell, the Lady Juliana Berners, who discusses the questions of "how gentymen began, and how the law of armys was first ordaynt," starting from the fall of the angels and the creation; she proves our Saviour to be "a gentylman on his moder's side," and goes on to show "by the lynage of coote armuris, how gentylmen are to be known from ungentylmen." No doubt, in the earliest ages, kings and military chieftains bore distinguishing devices on their standards—sometimes, perhaps, on their

shields and helmets ; but the general use of such devices, and their hereditary transmission, are practices that unquestionably arose only in the age of feudalism and chivalry ; and it is not difficult to account for their adoption. The essence of the feudal system was the obligation to military service of those who held lands under the lord or suzerain. Each knight was bound for his "fee" to bring into the field, when called on by his lord, a certain number of men-at-arms. A feudal army, therefore, was necessarily composed of a great number of separate companies, each obeying the orders only of its knightly leader, and fighting under his banner or pennon. It became expedient, consequently, to vary to a very great extent the symbols displayed on these standards ; and it is obvious how equally necessary it was that the person of the leader himself, who often fought with the visor of his helmet down, so that his features could not be distinguished, should be distinguished by the blazoning of conspicuous colours on his shield, and some well-known badge on his helmet. The sons of those who had "won bright honour" on such occasions would therefore naturally wish to bear the badges which their fathers' prowess had distinguished ; and the inheritance of arms was thus an unavoidable consequence of their general assumption.

Many heraldic signs and cognisances were, no doubt, originally assumed as distinctive decorations at tournaments ; but the greater number probably took their rise from incidents on the field of battle—such as the bloody heads and hands, the battle-axes and swords, gauntlets, arrows, turrets, and so forth, with which so many shields are charged. The "simple ordinaries," as they are called—the bar, the bend, the cross, &c.—were probably at their origin, but stripes of blood or paint stuck on the field of victory across a plain shield by its bearer or his approving leader. Some bearings are celebrated by tradition as having thus originated. We may instance as an early example of this kind, the cognisance of the Hays, Earls of Errol, in the Scottish peerage. The founder of the family, according to tradition, was a ploughman, who, with his two sons, rallied the Scots to the defeat of the Danes, at the battle of Luncarty (A.D. 942). The old man used a plough-yoke as a weapon, whence the crest of the Hays has remained to this day a rustic bearing a plough-yoke in his hands. To this class also belong the "augmentations" of their family coats, granted to our generals and admirals. Thus, in the arms of the Earl of Camperdown, a sailor is introduced as a "supporter."

The original of this sailor was one James Crawford, a Sunderland man, who, during the battle of Camperdown, climbed the stump of the mainmast of the "Venerable," flagship, and, although the rigging was shot away under his feet, kept his position, and no fewer than seven times nailed up Admiral Duncan's flag after it had been shot away.

The scallop-shells, besants, Saracen's heads, crescents and crosses in all their varieties, smack strongly of the crusades, in which they were doubtless first adopted. The animals with which so many coats are charged were probably assumed as emblematical of their respective qualities. The "magnanimous lion, king of beasts," was, of course, a general favourite, and every device that ingenuity could suggest was soon adopted to vary his mode of appearance. He is "tricked" of all colours, and in every attitude; he is cut up into demi-lions, or reduced to a lioncel; he is "collared," "crowned," "fettered" or "armed" with every known implement of violence; his head and limbs, and even his tail, are severed and displayed in every imaginable position; and lastly, the unlucky beast is *debruisé*, *dehaché*, or "*coupé* in all parts" to adorn the coat of the Maitlands. Next to the lion in general esteem, ranks, perhaps, the leopard, two of which are supposed to have been borne on the shield of William the Conqueror. The stag, the boar, the eagle, the falcon, the greyhound, the bull and the horse run very close in the rivalry for favour. The technical description by heralds of some of these cognisances sounds not a little whimsical to the uninitiated, as where mention is made of "two greyhounds *respecting* each other," a "peacock *affronté*," a "buck's head *attired* proper," &c.

Some changes are evidently chosen as a sort of hieroglyph of the family name, such as the roach borne by Roches, the primroses of Lord Rosebery, the whales of Whalley, the arrows of Archer, the elephant of the Oliphants, and the three right arms, mailed and gauntleted, of the Armstrongs. Sometimes, however, the process is reversed, and the name is made to suit the arms, as in the case of that family one of whose members achieved just the other day the distinction of a two-volume biography by Mr. Andrew Lang. The name Lockhart was originally a topographical name of Celtic stock, and had nothing whatever to do with locks or hearts until the adoption (in commemoration of the pilgrimage of King Robert the Bruce's heart) of the device of a human heart and a fetter-lock, and the motto *corda serata fero*—"I bear a locked heart." Not only

have the earth, the air, and the waters under the earth been ransacked for heraldic figures, but the very heavens have been laid under contribution. Chaloner bears three cherubims; and suns, crescents, and stars shine on many shields. Bishops appropriately have for cognisances, keys, crosiers, paschal lambs, bibles, and even angels. But, perhaps the most singular device to be found at the present day is that of the house of Dalziel—a naked man hanging from a gibbet. This is a bearing of honour, despite its ugly look, and here again we have an instance of the motto giving the name to the family—Dalziel (pronounced Dalyell) is said to be the old Celtic equivalent of the family motto “I dare.”

The origin of “supporters” is much disputed by heralds, some maintaining that they are derived from the custom of an individual about to be invested with some dignity being led to his sovereign between two nobles, in remembrance of which he chooses two noble animals or figures to support his arms; others trace the supporters to the tournaments, at which the knights had their shields borne before them by pages tricked out as lions, griffins, black-armours, and so forth. In England the use of supporters is confined to the peerage and knights of the garter, with the addition of a few untitled families who have received a royal grant for special services; while in Scotland, baronets of the Nova Scotia creation and chiefs of clans are also entitled to them. It might be noted here in connection with supporters that the familiar lion and unicorn of the royal arms are obliged sometimes to exchange places. As a general rule, the lion, which represents England, holds the post of honour at the right hand side of the shield, while two quarters of the shield itself are allotted to the leopards, which also represent England; but when the royal arms are used within the kingdom of Scotland, the Scottish part of the bearings get—or ought to get—the position of honour. The unicorn, the supporter which represents the northern kingdom, takes the dexter side; and the quartering of the shield is reversed, Scotland’s rampant lion being duplicated, and taking the two quarters usually assigned to the English leopards, while the leopards take the one quarter usually occupied by the lion. In most cases where the royal arms are carved on government buildings in Scotland, they appear in the Scottish version just described. It is somewhat remarkable that this fact has not been grasped as a peg whereon to hang another “injustice” to poor ould Ireland.

Paid in Full.

By EVELYN E. BOGLE.

CHAPTER III.

I SUPPOSE the disadvantage of being extremely happy, is, that afterwards the smallest turning of the scales in the other direction makes you feel correspondingly miserable. At least, I think that must have been the reason why, as I sat in the large drawing-room at Craven Hill, listening to Aunt Matty and Mr. Drummond talking, I felt so very unhappy.

You see, I had put on my prettiest dress and an absolutely new hat, and Oswald, after saying very little more than "How d'ye do?" had allowed Ned to carry him off somewhere to talk about business. And though it was now a quarter to five, had not yet returned. And he had gone so readily too. Of course I liked that he should be good natured, but if he had only said "bother"—as he had done that morning—instead of complying at once with Ned's demands, and leaving the room with his arm in my brother's, and only a laughing backward glance in my direction, I think I should not have felt so suddenly deserted and alone. As it was, I drew patterns on the carpet with the end of my parasol, and listened to Aunt Matty explaining all the wants and necessities of the Deep Sea Fishermen to Mr. Drummond.

"Ha! Hum! Yes! Exactly!" he said at intervals. "Jerseys, stockings, mittens! Well I suppose, even if you can find ladies to work them for nothing you want money for the wool—or something—eh?"

"Yes, indeed," was the reply. "I assure you the wool is a great item of expense."

"Perhaps, then, you'll allow me to contribute towards defraying it?"

Aunt Matty's cheeks grew quite pink. I think that next to Ned and I, "The Deep Sea Fishermen" held the warmest place in her heart. And this was such an unexpected offer of help.

"Oh, you are very kind," she exclaimed, "very kind! I do

collect for it ; but lately the subscriptions, I am sorry to say, have rather fallen off——”

“The fishermen going out of fashion ? Well, perhaps I may be able to make up the deficit. Don’t you see Oswald coming back, yet, Miss Dorothy ?”

I turned sharply round from the window, out of which I had been taking surreptitious glances. The odious old thing ! What eyes he had !

“I was admiring the rhododendrons,” I replied, with as much dignity as my rising colour would permit. “Is Mr. Drummond in the garden ?”

“Oh, I don’t know,” laughing just as if he had heard a good joke. Then as the door opened : “Ah ; here are the truants, and the tea. Both welcome. Miss Powell, will you or your niece be so kind as to dispense it ?”

Aunt Matty declined, on the plea that she never could remember who liked sugar, and I took the place behind the tea-pot. As I did so, I could not help thinking that Ned’s “business” must be of a very harassing nature, for Oswald now looked worried and put out.

“I’m afraid you have had a dull time of it,” he said, as he took his father’s and Aunt Matty’s tea from my hands.

“Oh dear no,” I answered. “I’ve had a real exciting time. There are thirty-six brass-headed nails in the side of the chair that Aunt Matty is sitting on, multiplied by four, that makes one hundred and forty-four ; and the ‘Deep Sea Fishermen’ like four-ply wool for their mittens. There is no connection between the two though.”

“Dolly, I *am* sorry.”

“About which : the nails or the fishermen ?”

Oswald gave a little laugh, but it did not sound very mirthful.

“I must go up to town this evening,” he said.

I looked up quickly, and seeing the expression on his face, told myself that I was an ungrateful creature to find fault with him, while, after all, it was *my* brother’s business that he was worrying over.

“I suppose it is about Ned you are going ?” I said. “Oswald, it *is* good of you !”

His face lighted up at once. “There is no question about goodness,” he answered, quickly. “I always feel I owe your brother a lot. Didn’t you know he once saved my life, at the risk of his own ?”

I *had* heard the story before, it was one I always repeated to myself, when Ned's London doings weighed heaviest; surely he had good in him and would sober down some day. But before I could make any reply, the subject of our conversation came up with an empty cup, followed by old Mr. Drummond.

"Oswald," said the latter, in a low tone, "you know that cheque I gave you for one hundred pounds for Smith and Co.? I'll make out another to-morrow; in the meantime, put that one in an envelope, and address it to Miss Powell; I wish to give it as a subscription—mittens for seamen or something—but do it *now*."

"All right, sir!"

Oswald left the room, smiling, as if amused, and Ned followed, while I glanced across at Aunt Matty, who was sipping her tea in blissful unconsciousness of the joys in store for her. What would she say when she knew? One hundred pounds! Mr. Drummond must be a wealthy man, as well as generous.

Presently Oswald returned, and said something to his father, evidently concerning the subscription, for the latter answered: "Never mind, that will do as well, it's all money—save trouble perhaps. Eh? What's that?" as Oswald continued speaking. "Going to town?"

"I'm sorry, but I must go; by the six-three. I shall slip away now, and be back to luncheon to-morrow."

"What's the matter?"

"Only a little business suddenly turned up. Nothing of consequence. I will bring you Miss Powell's money." He disappeared, returning in a minute with a closed envelope in his hand, which he gave to his father, then, as the latter immediately advanced to Aunt Matty, he turned to me. "Will you remember this dull afternoon against me, when I turn up at tea-time to-morrow, Dolly?" he asked. I shook my head. But all the nice little things I might have said, to show him how I did forgive him, took flight, and I could only go on pleating the tea-cloth in a most senseless manner. He stooped down, and under cover of the tea cosy, kissed my hand. "I must go," he said. "Good-bye, my love, till to-morrow." The next moment he had left the room.

Almost immediately after, we took our departure, and as we were walking home, I slipped my hand under Aunt Matty's arm.

"How much do you think Mr. Drummond's subscription is?" I

asked. Aunt Matty looked down at the envelope with a glance that was almost reverential.

"My dear," she answered, "I think, mind, I only think; I won't be disappointed if I find myself mistaken, but it *feels* like a five pound note."

"Five pounds!" I echoed, contemptuously, at the same time absolving Mr. Drummond from all his sins as I thought of the pleasure in store for her. "It is a cheque for one hundred pounds, and——"

"It is *not*. What rubbish you are chattering."

It was Ned's voice that interrupted me, but it was his *face* that prevented me from at once replying. It was so white, and in his eyes a look that reminded me of that memorable day, when I had first met Oswald, and in the evening Ned had told me something dreadful would happen if he did not get twenty pounds. He looked away as he met my astonished gaze, but scarcely seemed to hear Aunt Matty's gentle:

"Edward, my *dear* boy!"

"The idea of old Drummond giving away a sum like that in *charity*," he continued, awkwardly, as if he were ashamed of his sudden outburst. "I wish you would not exaggerate things so, Dolly."

"But it is not exaggeration," I replied, "and I *know* there is a hundred pounds in that envelope, for I heard Mr. Drummond tell his son——"

"Nonsense; you misunderstood him. I am convinced you did."

Ned's manner was so excited and odd, that I made no reply to this, though Aunt Matty said: "Yes, dear, I think you must be mistaken."

After all, they would very soon find that I was not. But what difficulty could Ned be in now, to make him so irritable and unlike himself? Surely it must be something worse than usual. And so occupied was I with these thoughts, that when, on reaching home, Aunt Matty, in a little flutter of excitement, proceeded to open the envelope, I stood aside, absently smoothing my gloves, only turning, when I heard her say, exultantly: "It is a *ten* pound note, Dolly; how kind of him."

I looked at the thin, crackly piece of paper in much surprise. Then I had been mistaken after all. And yet I was almost sure I

had heard Mr. Drummond say: "The cheque for one hundred pounds—put it in an envelope for Miss Powell." Well, it was odd, but fortunately, Aunt Matty, who had evidently never given credence to my story, was more than satisfied with what was really a very handsome subscription; and later on in the evening, she sent a letter to Craven Hill, and a most official-looking receipt (the first she had torn out of her collecting book that year).

At dinner I was relieved to see that Ned had regained his spirits to a certain extent. He had not been present when Aunt Matty had opened her envelope; but he only laughed when I told him that he was right.

"Men—even wealthy ones—don't chuck money away at that rate," he answered, and then changing the subject, he talked and chatted, quite in his usual style, delighting Aunt Matty's heart by singing comic songs after dinner till it was time to go to bed.

My first waking thought the next morning was: Oswald is coming to-day. My next: then Aunt Matty will know, and I shall no longer feel as if I were keeping something from her.

But he was not coming till three or four in the afternoon, and there were all the morning hours to be got through, and, somehow, I could settle to nothing. My restlessness seemed, in a measure, shared by Ned, who also hung about idle and expectant looking, while I remembered that Oswald would probably be bringing him news of "the business," which had taken him to London. At last I decided to take the dogs a walk, and so infectious were their boisterous spirits, as they tore along the road, chasing the sparrows and each other, that I went further than I had intended, and it was past the luncheon hour when I returned. As I entered the house, the parlourmaid met me.

"If you please, miss," she said, "will you go into the dining-room? Miss Powell wishes to speak to you. Mr. Drummond is there," she added.

"Oh!" I exclaimed, while a sudden disinclination to enter the room came over me. I felt so hot and dusty, but Aunt Matty's voice calling: "Dorothy! Dorothy! is that you?" told me I was too late to beat a retreat. When I entered, one glance at both their faces showed me that their conversation was not on the subject I had prepared myself for. Aunt Matty's cap was all on one side—a sure sign of great inward perturbation; and Oswald rose from his

seat at the writing table to greet me—with a grave perplexed face.

"Dorothy," began Aunt Matty, "is not this a provoking business? Poor Mr. Drummond has lost some money, and all through his generosity to my 'fishermen.' You were quite right, dear, he meant me to have one hundred pounds. Think of it! But there was only ten pounds in the envelope, and we think the rest of the money must have dropped out."

"Miss Powell cannot find the envelope," put in Oswald. "I should like to have seen it. If I had not fastened it properly, the cheque *might* have dropped out and some of the notes. It hardly seems possible, though," he added.

"What was in the envelope?" I asked.

"A cheque for fifty pounds, and five ten-pound notes."

"So kind of your father," wailed Aunt Matty; "and to think he has lost it through me."

"Oh, to a certain extent the money is pretty safe," answered Oswald, "because after receiving your receipt, my father telegraphed the number of the notes and cheque to our bank, and payment is already stopped. Besides, I am the person," he continued, "on whom all the blame rests. I suppose I must have put in one note and chucked the rest away, or something equally clever."

"I know where the envelope will be," I said, suddenly; "in the pocket of your best dress, auntie; I'll run and look."

As I flew out of the room, I came into collision in the hall with Ned. At the sight of his face I stopped.

"Ned!" I exclaimed. "What is the matter? You are ill! I will call——"

"No one!" he gasped, seizing my arm roughly. "Don't be a fool! I'm all right; give me a glass of that wine."

The belated luncheon things were all on a tray near by—a decanter of wine and several glasses. I filled one as desired, and was relieved to see a little colour creep into Ned's white face, after he had drunk it, though he set down the glass with a hand that trembled visibly. He glanced at the clock, and then snatching his cap from the stand, walked towards the door.

"Ned," I cried, "where are you going? Do tell me what is wrong!"

"Nothing," he answered, sharply, shaking my hand off his arm. "I

have—business in the village I must see to. You need not say anything about it, though,” he added, as he hurried down the avenue; and I turned to go upstairs in great perplexity.

Everything seemed to go wrong together; and when I presented the crumpled envelope to Oswald, it threw no light on the matter. Aunt Matty had torn it open at the top, but the flap was still securely fastened down. Oswald turned it about in his fingers.

“I shall institute another search in my waste-paper basket,” he said; “and I do hope you will forgive my troubling you, and the way in which I have kept you from your lunch.” He shook hands with Aunt Matty, and then came to where I stood, by the door, idly drawing my gloves through my fingers. “Our own affairs seem fated to suffer interruptions, Dorothy,” he said. “My poor father does worry so over things. But I *shall* see you some time this afternoon. I thing I shall just run down to the Post Office, and see if there is any telegram from the bank.”

“Then you’ll be in the village,” I said. “Ned’s gone there, and he was looking so horribly ill, I wish you’d send him home if you meet him.”

“I will, if I can,” he answered, smiling. “Good-bye!”

As I sat down to my very late luncheon, with Aunt Matty, I told myself that everything would come right that afternoon, when Oswald came—probably with the missing notes and cheque in his hand—and then, *together*, we would plan some way by which Ned’s “business” might be satisfactorily settled, once and for all.

CHAPTER IV.

JUNE roses with their strong sweet perfume! To this day whenever I see them or feel their scent I think of that afternoon when I sat in the drawing-room at “The Hollies” trying to entertain two ladies who were calling, and all the time wondering what was keeping Oswald, and if his old father was worrying his life out about the lost cheque!

The door swung open. I looked quickly round. “Mrs. Gray,” announced Simpson in a solemn voice. In walked the rector’s wife, and I turned away with a chill feeling of disappointment.

"If you please, Miss—" Simpson was standing at my side—"one of the servants from Craven Hill gave me this note for you."

I took it from her, wondering if something else had gone wrong. A glance round the room assured me that for a minute or so the four other occupants were sufficient for each other's entertainment, and I could read my letter unnoticed. It was not long and began very abruptly—

"I am leaving Penhurst, and you Dorothy (by the time you get this I shall probably have left) because I have just told my father that instead of giving the cheque and notes to your aunt, I gave them to a man in London in payment of a debt. I can give no further explanation,—but of course our engagement, everything, is at an end—is to be *forgotten*.

Dorothy, my father may give you details about the matter, believe them if you like, but also believe this. Though I may never see your face again, every word I have said to you, was true,—*is true*

OSWALD DRUMMOND."

"Dorothy dear, Dorothy! Mrs. Gray has no tea and Miss Smith would like some cake!" Aunt Matty's voice seemed to come from a long distance, but I crushed my letter—my first love letter—up in my hand, poured out Mrs. Gray's tea—she did take sugar—and gave Miss Smith the choice of cress sandwiches, cake, or toasted scones. I had made these scones myself that morning, but not for Miss Smith. Then I sat down and began to wonder vaguely if it were my mind or Oswald's that was going, or, granting our sanity, how did you set about "forgetting" people.

"And you quite understand me, Dolly." I became aware that Mrs. Gray was speaking to me. "I don't wish to give any trouble, but really I can't think of another place so suitable to the school treat. Such a beautiful large field it is; and if *you* would ask Mr. Drummond, I'm sure he would let us have it. I met his son as I was coming here, and stopped to sound him on the subject, but I could get no satisfactory answer, he seemed in a great hurry, to catch a train, I think, so I thought I had better ask you."

I murmured "Yes" and looked at the clock, while the first lines of the letter I held, returned to my mind, "I am leaving Penhurst and you."

Mrs. Gray had been here about a quarter of an hour; it was now

half-past four. Oswald must be going by the five minutes to five train. In twenty-five minutes he must be gone, would have left Penhurst—and me! I rose suddenly to my feet. Mrs. Gray was still talking, but about what I had not the faintest idea. "Excuse me a moment" I said, and left the room.

If anybody had been looking out of the drawing-room window two minutes later, they would have seen me pass on my way to the station.

I did not want any details from old Mr. Drummond, I told myself; I intended to get them from Oswald. What did I care about cheques. Fifty of them might be missing. Perhaps Aunt Matty was the thief; was sitting talking to Mrs. Gray just now, with all the notes up her sleeve.

I arrived at the station about ten minutes before the London train was expected, and found it in its usual sleepy silence; but the moment I stepped on to the platform I saw at the further end a tall, erect figure, the very sight of which made my breath come fast, and a choky feeling rise in my throat. How dare anyone say that *he* would take money that did not belong to him. I ran swiftly down the platform and called him by name. He turned sharply round.

"Dorothy!" he ejaculated, and for a moment stood looking silently at me.

"What does all this mean?" I began. "Why are you going away? Why——"

He pushed open the door of the little room that was dignified by the name of "waiting-room."

"Come in here," he said; then as I complied he added, "Did you not get my letter?"

"Yes" I said, feeling more miserable every moment.

Oswald looked so stern and cold.

"But why did you not come and *tell* me—about everything."

"I did not—wish to—see you" he said slowly.

And I had come half a mile, in a tremendous hurry, to see him! For an instant I struggled wildly to look indignant, then I gave up the battle, sat down on the horse-hair couch and burst into tears!

The next moment he was kneeling at my side, his arm round me, and leaving me no reason to call him "cold!"

"Dorothy, love," he said, "don't you understand? Did I not make it plain in my letter? My father believes me a thief——"

"I don't care about your father," I retorted; "You are not a thief."

"I gave the money that was meant for your aunt to another person." He repeated the words like a lesson he had learned by rote, and his eyes did not meet mine.

"I don't believe you," I answered boldly.

He rose to his feet and walked the length of the little room before replying, and when he did so, his voice was once more cold and still.

"That is why I am going," he said; "It is the only thing to be done, for, of course,"—with a bitter laugh—"I'm not fit company for honest men now."

"Don't, Oswald," I exclaimed. "Listen to me; you said in your letter that all you ever told me was true; well, then, I don't care what anybody believes—I don't care what you say yourself! If—if you want money—Ned often does—I've got some, a little, and, oh, Oswald, don't go away, or else—take me with you!"

I was feeling quite desperate by this time, for a shrill whistle sounded in the distance, and I heard the solitary porter our little station boasted tramping about outside.

Oswald made a sudden movement, as if he would have taken me in his arms, then as suddenly checked himself, and once more walked the length of the room.

"I *can't* take you," he said in a hoarse, choked kind of voice, "it's utterly impossible! Oh, for Heaven's sake," he added almost roughly, "don't look at me like that!"

"Now for Charing Cross, Cannon Street and London Bridge," bawled the porter outside. There were two fat country-women and a farmer's boy standing on the platform, and the idea of packing off four passengers all at once evidently excited him.

In thundered the train, the country-woman and the boy, followed by the porter, commenced to rush up and down frantically. Trains only stopped a moment or so at Penhurst station, and the passengers they picked up were generally in a great state of excitement and confusion of mind.

Oswald caught both my hands in a grip that was absolute pain.

"Good-bye," he said under his breath—then he was gone. There was a great banging of doors, another shrill whistle, and three minutes later silence once more pervaded the station.

As I was leaving the waiting-room, I turned and looked back; what a common-place little apartment it was, with its three hard chairs and uninviting looking couch, and yet—it would never seem exactly common-place to me again.

Had any other people said “good-bye” there, I wondered, and left feeling as utterly miserable as I did, wondering what they were to do, how they were to live until—ah, that was the dreadful part, there was no “until” for me; what had been was to be forgotten!—at this point I hastily left; that hideous little waiting-room was surely haunted.

When I reached home I was surprised to find I had only been away forty minutes, and Mrs. Gray’s umbrella was still in the hall. I met Simpson on the stairs, told her if Aunt Matty asked for me that I had a bad headache and was lying down, then I went to my room, locked the door, flung myself on the bed and gave full rein to my misery.

It was nearly dark when I heard Aunt Matty’s voice outside, but before I opened the door, I pulled down the blind, as a slight shield to my tear-stained face. But the precaution was scarcely necessary, as after a few enquiries for my headache, she burst out, “Oh, Dolly, I am so distressed, Ned is going to London early to-morrow morning!”

“Is he?” I echoed stupidly; everybody seemed to be going away, I began to wish I could go too, but Aunt Matty’s next words smote me reproachfully.

“Oh dear, dear,” she sighed, “I wish Ned was a girl, he wouldn’t want to go away then!”

I put my arms round her, and kissed her soft cheek.

“He will come back in a day or two,” I said reassuringly, while I inwardly vowed that during that time I would put my own trouble aside and try and keep her in good spirits.

“Is there any packing to be done?”

“Nothing that Simpson and I cannot manage,” she answered, “but it is such a pity, the washing has not come in, and I doubt if he will have enough collars! You, my dear child, should go to bed, your cheeks are quite hot. Are you sure you don’t feel ill?”

“Quite,” I answered, “I never get ill,” but I gave her another hug before she left the room, there was something so comfortable in Aunt Matty’s round plump little body! Even the way in which her shawl hung round her was motherly!

And then I fell to wondering if she had ever said "good-bye" to anybody. And would I some day be like her, placid and calm, only disturbed by the contrariness of other people's children, and the lateness of the weekly wash!

Ned went off before I was up the next morning, and I was dreadfully ashamed when I found that it was Aunt Matty who had given him his early breakfast. However, I came down full of good resolutions! At all costs I must not let Aunt Matty get into low spirits over Ned's departure!

As an outcome of this determination I went to the drawing-room with the intention of fulfilling an old promise to wash all her "special" pieces of china. Unfortunately, however, the first thing I chanced upon inside an old jar, was a photograph Ned had taken of Oswald, me and the dogs! It was not a bad one, but had never been properly developed, for it was turning yellow in places and had evidently been dropped into this jar to be out of the way.

Now, however, it appeared to me in the light of a treasure! I had no photograph of Oswald, and I was gazing at this through a mist of tears, when a voice said behind me—

"As soon as you have quite done looking at that thing, I will be obliged if you will devote a little attention to me!"

I turned sharply round and saw Mr. Drummond glaring at me through his spectacles.

"Is your aunt at home?" he asked, his keen eyes travelling slowly from my face to the photograph that I held in my hand. "Because I have brought the subscription I promised her for the 'seamen's stockings,' and I wish to apologise for the—mistake that was made about it."

I begin to think your advice Miss Dorothy was rather good, "Employ *servants* to do those messages you are disinclined for."

"I don't remember ever giving you such advice," I answered, coldly.

"Do you not? Ah, my memory is the best then. You told me that was what you did, and finished by congratulating me on having a *son* willing to run mine—he was willing, a little too willing! You are surprised perhaps that I speak to you like this, but you see I am aware, that the real state of the case is known to you. You were to have been his wife—but he sent you a letter yesterday. You should be thankful, young lady! You've narrowly escaped marrying a thief!"

"Yes, I suppose I should," I replied, the quiet evenness of my own voice surprising me. "But indeed, Mr. Drummond, I hardly think you know *how* narrow the escape was; because I answered your son's letter, a few minutes after, *in person*, and told him that I had no objection to being the wife of a thief! That I would rather go to the ends of the earth with him than stay here—alone! But he would not listen to me—in other words *I was refused*!! So you see the 'escape' was *very* narrow indeed!!"

Mr. Drummond made no immediate reply to this, and for a few moments we stood glaring at each other in silence. Then suddenly he produced an envelope, and held it towards me.

"Give that to your aunt," he said, "with what apologies you can make up! It's the cheque I owe her. She will get it this time!"

"How do you know?" I retorted, "aren't you afraid that *I* will steal it?"

"*No!*" he roared, dashing the envelope down on the nearest table with a whack that sent several photo frames and nick-nacks flying. "I'm not afraid that *you* will steal *my* money, because though you are an *utter* fool, you've got the pride of the devil!" And before I could make any reply to this flattering description of myself, he had hobbled from the room, downstairs, and out of the house!

When Aunt Matty came in, found the cheque, and heard that Mr. Drummond himself had brought it, I received as severe a scolding as she had ever given me, for my inhospitality in not asking him to stay to lunch, or at any rate rest a little before returning all that way in the heat, by himself! "Why, he has not been *anywhere* without the help of his son's arm!" she declared, "it's enough to kill him! Dorothy it *was* careless of you!"

I expressed my contrition as well as I could, at the same time feeling a reprehensible indifference as to whether Mr. Drummond's unusual exertions had such a dire result! All my good resolutions were broken! and that morning I neither dusted the drawing-room or washed the china!

But in the evening I was a prey to remorse! For as the dessert was being laid on the table, Simpson, with an air of importance, becoming a person who imparts news that she knows will cause a sensation, told us that she had just heard through the Craven Hill gardener—who I noticed was fond of paying evening visits at "The

Hollies"—that poor Mr. Drummond had been taken very dangerously ill early that afternoon, and that the doctor had telegraphed for two London nurses, and seemed to think very badly of him!

"And they do say, ma'am," added Simpson with a swift, sidelong glance at me, but growing more communicative as she saw the impression she was making on Aunt Matty, "this illness has been brought on in consequence of the quarrel he has had with his son, who left quite sudden yesterday afternoon, for no one knows where, his club address being the only one to which the news of his father's illness could be sent!" Of course this news distressed Aunt Matty greatly, but she scoffed at the idea of any disagreement between Oswald and his father; and I, feeling it impossible to say a word on that point, she tormented herself with the idea that it was all the results of the walk he had taken to our house, her opinion being strengthened, when, on inquiring the next day, we learned that Mr. Drummond was no better, and Mr. Oswald had newly arrived!

* * * *

The hope I had cherished, that things would somehow right themselves now that Oswald was once more in Penhurst, died slowly, but completely, as the days passed away and he neither came, or sent any message to me. Indeed, he might not have been in the place for anything I saw or heard of him! And this very fact went farther than anything else to convince me how completely apart we now were!

I suppose there was something altogether wrong with my sense of honour; but I know at that time I often thought that, if I had been perfectly sure that Oswald loved me as much as he had once told me he did, I could have forgiven him *anything*—even the fact that he had stolen another man's money! But on that second point I never had two opinions, and it was only the first I was now beginning to doubt. I think even Aunt Matty was feeling, that our relations with Craven Hill were on an entirely different footing. There were two nurses, so the uselessness of offering to manufacture beef-tea was obvious, and as the "curate's wife" was busy bringing up a family of chirping yellow chickens, of course, failing her, Mr. Drummond might have any common hen's eggs! We sent to enquire regularly, and were told sometimes that the patient was better, sometimes just the same, and it was from Simpson I learned anything about Oswald's movements.

Simpson was a curious girl, a very good parlour-maid, but the most stiff and conventional of all our servants. About that time, however, she suddenly conceived a great desire to add to her duties by assisting me in my dressing morning and evening! It was rather ridiculous, because I hate having a maid, but I found that the Craven Hill gardener was still constant in his evening visits, and *from him, through* Simpson, I obtained information, that meagre though it might be, was too precious to be lost by dispensing with her attentions, which even then I used to wonder at! And it was not till long after, that I discovered that the only time in his life when Oswald had taken any pronounced interest in gardening, was between June and July of that year, and that he also was aware of the *penchant* his gardener had for our parlour-maid!

So the days and weeks went by with a slow monotony that was very trying. "Mr. Oswald," I was told, "went to town every day, returning in the evening; at stated intervals seeing his father; and later information said that he only visited Craven Hill from Saturday to Monday. Meanwhile my principal occupation was trying to keep Aunt Matty in good spirits. She had caught a slight cold, which she found difficult to get rid of. Ned was still away, and his letters, few and far between, kept her anxious. He was not in London, but abroad, had been there nearly all the time. He had already made two requests for money, and since the last had been answered, a long silence had ensued.

Then one morning we were startled by receiving a telegram from London: "Mr. Edward Powell has met with an accident, and is lying here; 5, Washford Street, Bloomsbury Square. Please come at once.—H. Mason"

Aunt Matty rose to the emergency gallantly! I thought, considering how depressed she had been of late, that news of this sort would have completely overwhelmed her, but instead the news that someone required "nursing" seemed to endow her with new life and in the bustle and hurry of getting away, real anxiety was for the time forgotten.

She would not allow me to accompany her either, deciding that I would be better at home looking after the rooms that were to be prepared for the reception of the invalid, but at my earnest entreaty she took Simpson.

I had no need to complain of monotony that day! My hands were

full carrying out the numerous directions I had been given. But by the evening, when I had everything arranged, another orange coloured missive arrived instead of the invalid. Poor Ned was evidently too ill to be at once moved, and I was bidden to wait and keep in readiness to receive them. Waiting is always hard, especially when it follows excitement of any kind: and I found it so unendurable that I accepted a very unlooked for invitation sent by Mr. Drummond after lunch, saying he was sorry to hear my brother had been ill, and would I go up to Craven Hill and see him that afternoon for a few minutes. When I arrived, a soft voiced white-capped nurse conducted me to Mr. Drummond's dressing-room. On the way, in answer to a question how her patient was, and if she did not think seeing me would be bad for him, she said, "Oh, no, I think he has been wishing to see you lately!"

"To see *me*!" I repeated in much surprise.

"Surely not, I have good reason to believe he dislikes me extremely!"

The nurse smiled. "I think you are mistaken," she said gently, "of course I cannot help seeing that something—some family matter is troubling my patient. When he was at his worst he incessantly called for his son. In fact he would have nothing to say to anyone else! But as he got better, matters have been completely reversed, and since then you have been the only person he has expressed a wish to see!"

We had reached the door of the dressing-room by this time, and before I could say a word, I was in Mr. Drummond's presence. He was lying on a big sofa, looking much the same as when I had first seen him, a little more shrunken perhaps, but his eyes were as keen as ever. After I had said "How-do-you-do," and been provided with a chair, the nurse retired into the inner room, and Mr. Drummond said: "Had any further news of your brother?" As I replied in the negative, he grunted, "I suppose your aunt is worrying herself into fiddle-strings over him—and much good he has ever done either of you!"

This was a promising commencement! However, I told myself he was ill, and also the nurse's description of how he had called for Oswald, came to my mind. Perhaps he did love his son after all, I thought, so I answered quietly, "Yes, Aunt Matty is very anxious about Ned."

"I thought so—casting pearls before swine!—and they're all alike, not worth tuppence!"

"Oh, Mr. Drummond! *All* of them? Weren't you worth 'tuppence' when you were young!"

Rather to my surprise—for I was half afraid what the results of this retort might be—he gave a cackling little laugh. "Neatly turned," he said, "not bad! You know I sent for you because I'm sick of being agreed with, and you and I *never* agree! Do we?"

"N—no," I said slowly.

"Humph! You were surer of that the last time I saw you! Now listen to me!—lean forward! What I have to say must not be overheard! Do you know, before—mark you, *before*—Oswald acknowledged that he took that money, *he had received a telegram from the Bank* stating that a man had just presented the notes, had been arrested, and swore they had been given him by *Mr. Drummond's son*! Now, *how* can he be innocent!"

All the time he was speaking, his eyes were searching my face with a wistful eagerness that went to my heart. Poor lonely old man! How evident it was that in sending for me he had hoped I would have brought him some proof of Oswald's innocence!

The tears were in my eyes as I said "I don't know *how*, Mr. Drummond, except that I simply *can't* believe the opposite!" and I suddenly added, "I don't believe *you* believe him guilty either!"

"You have great powers of belief then! But in that case if he is not a thief, he must be a liar!"

I shook my head. But though the words sounded horrid, I did not feel angry with the speaker.

"I'm sure we have only heard *half a truth*!" I replied, "some day we will hear the rest!"

Then the nurse came into the room, and I, taking this as a hint that I had stayed long enough, took my departure, leaving Mr. Drummond's presence for the first time without feeling either enraged with my myself or him!

When I got home I found another telegram awaiting me; I was getting accustomed to them now, but this one realised my worst fears—"Edward dying, come at once!"

That hurried journey to London remains in my mind only as a kind of horrible dream. I remember feeling vaguely surprised by being met at the station by Oswald, and correspondingly depressed

at the appearance of No. 5, Washford Street, to which we drove in a hansom, Oswald giving me the latest information about Ned.

Everything in that part of London seemed hot and dusty. A hospital nurse—whose cap was the only spotlessly clean thing I ever saw in that house—was standing in the narrow passage, talking with a little man whom Oswald addressed as Dr. West, and who gave me an elaborate bow on being introduced, and said "Miss Powell can see her brother whenever she likes, only it must be for a very few minutes at a time." Then turning once more to the nurse, he added, "and remember, though I know it is difficult, as far as you can, keep *Mrs. Powell* out of the room. I shall come round again to-night, and——" He stopped suddenly and we all turned, as a noisy step was heard on the staircase, and a loud voice said, "Is that the doctor? I wish to speak to him, to ask him why I may not go into Mr. Powell's room. I have the best right of anybody here, *sure-ly*."

Out from the gloom of the dark little staircase, a woman appeared. She was pretty, in a loud, flashy style. But the "soiled" appearance that pervaded the whole house, rested on her also, on the red silk blouse that clothed her upper person and on the heavily be-ringed hand that was resting on the bannister.

Who on earth could she be, I wondered?

"Dolly!" It was Oswald's voice close behind me. He put his hand on my arm and gently drew me aside into a small room. A dull little place it seemed, and whether it was the appearance of the hard-looking couch and shiny table, or the tone in which Oswald had uttered my name, I do not know, but I was immediately reminded of the waiting-room at Penhurst station, and for a moment I could hardly speak. At last I said, partly because I felt I must say something, "Who is that woman?"

Oswald's hand was on the bell, at my question he turned his head aside.

"She?—oh she lives here," he said hurriedly. "Now I am going to ring for some tea, I am sure you must want it." At that moment I heard the doctor's voice outside—"I am sorry, Mrs. Powell, but excitement of any kind, you know, is to be *strictly avoided*!"—Oswald pulled the bell sharply, but I did not feel inclined for tea.

"Who is she?" I repeated, "tell me! Why is she called Mrs. Powell?"

"She *is* Mrs. Powell," he answered, "she is—Ned's wife!"

"Ned's wife!" I repeated dully. "When—were they married? Is she—a lady?"

"I don't know,—some years ago, I think."

I sat down on one end of the hard couch and wondered vaguely what else I was going to hear, and also if "Ned's wife" always argued with the doctor as loudly as she was doing at present.

Then the door opened and Simpson appeared, making me feel more and more as if I were in a nightmare.

"Your aunt would like you to come upstairs, Miss Dorothy," she said; and I rose and followed her.

A sudden silence had settled down outside. Mrs. Powell and the doctor were nowhere to be seen, only the nurse was slowly mounting the stairs, and we followed, making a sort of procession.

At the top of the first flight I met Aunt Matty, and the dream-like feeling vanished as I clasped my arms round her.

"Oh, Dorothy!" was all she said, but there was a great deal expressed in those two words.

"Take off your hat," she continued, after a moment's silence, "and then you can see Edward, but do not be surprised if he does not know you."

He did know me, however, though at first I thought he did not, his words were so odd.

He held out his hand whenever he saw me, and beginning exactly as if he were finishing a conversation interrupted some minutes ago, he said in a low but distinct voice—

"He's an awfully good fellow, Doll!—regular brick! and remember I always meant to pay the money back—I never thought it would have come out—Aunt Mat was too sharp with her receipt—and then the notes—but he was awfully good—and I am sorry—awfully sorry."

Here he closed his eyes and seemed to go off to sleep. But these words had put such a horrible thought into my head that forgetting everything else I cried "Ned!" in a sharp tone of pain. The nurse appeared suddenly from some corner, but what she said I did not hear. Only Ned slowly opened his eyes.

"All right," he said, "Drummond did give the money—but he did not know I had changed the—the thing—I told him I'm sorry—awfully—" His voice died away, and the next moment I was

outside the room, sitting on the stair, the nurse regarding me with stern disapproving eyes!

"You shouldn't have cried out like that!" she said; then her voice changed suddenly, and she added "Don't look so frightened, I don't suppose you've done any harm. Would you like to go to your room? I expect you are very tired—or tea will be ready downstairs, and Mr. Drummond——"

"No! no!" I broke in, rising to my feet," "I should prefer to go to my room, I don't want anything or to see anybody—but can I be of any help?"

Nurse smiled, and shook her head, as she followed me upstairs. "There are quite enough of us," she said. "This is your room. Your aunt will likely be up to see you presently, and if your brother should ask for you I will send." But I was not summoned to the sick-room, till very early the next morning, for then, in the grey dawn, before the sooty London sparrows had fully awakened, as a cool wind was whispering through the stunted evergreens in the back garden of Washford Street, Ned died.

* * * *

Two days later we returned to "The Hollies," but all through the gloom of that sad journey, one thought held supremacy in my mind, and I wished vainly that I could cry like Aunt Matty or even Simpson. My brother had been, not only a thief, but he had sheltered himself at another man's expense, had stood by and let another take the blame! Oh better—far better, if he had died before! if he had not only risked, but *given* his life for Oswald's, that night long ago, when they had both been in peril! Then his memory would have been worthy every man's admiration! Now! oh how different! The words I had said to Mr. Drummond returned to my memory. "We have only heard half a truth. Some day we will hear the rest." How little I had guessed what the rest would be! and there was still more to hear! but it was later on, from Mr. Bennett's lips, that I got full information. Then I learned why Ned had been so horrified on hearing that unless he was unmarried at the age of twenty-five—by the terms of his father's will—he would not inherit the greater part of his money, for two months previously at the age of nineteen, he had married Julia Mason, a young woman who served in a restaurant somewhere in the city, and whose parents kept the lodging-house in Washford Street. Under these altered

circumstances they had evidently agreed to keep the marriage secret till Ned attained his majority, when he would acknowledge her as his wife and trust to luck that no one would inquire the date of the marriage day! But at this point Mr. Bennett was rather evasive; I think he felt it difficult to expose all the deceit my brother had contemplated practising, if by any chance he might obtain his father's money.

But, of course, in the interim Mrs. Edward Powell required some kind of income, and here was the difficulty. Ned's remittances were scanty, and threatening letters that she would come down to Penhurst and make known the marriage—unless paid to keep away—was the cause that, followed by the yielding to a sudden temptation, made my father's son a thief! Only a few words were needed from Mr. Bennett—I could fill in all the blanks!

Ned's continual business talks with Oswald, it all meant borrowing money, though of the marriage and where the money went to, Oswald was in ignorance. How well I recollected that day at Craven Hill! Ned had received a demand from his wife for thirty pounds, but being only able to obtain ten, he enclosed it in an envelope, and as he felt unwilling to present it himself, persuaded Oswald to do so. Then came the sudden temptation. When, in the library, he was left alone with the unfastened envelope containing one hundred pounds, while Oswald was absent, telling his father the cheque was for £50 and notes to make up the sum. Ned in his hurry had not noticed that! But exposure must have seemed to him inevitable when the next morning he had overheard Oswald say to us that Mr. Drummond had telegraphed the numbers and stopped payment! Then, at the Post Office he had met Oswald, who was in receipt of the telegram, informing him that Mr. Mason—to whom he had in all innocence given Ned's letter—had been arrested! and of course Oswald was at once aware of the fraud, and after that—it was still easier for me to supply the blanks! One of them had to bear the blame! Some words of Oswald's recurred to me, "I always consider I owe your brother a great deal." Well he had certainly paid his debt!

Mr. Bennett considered the whole affair "most unbusinesslike!" Shockingly so! A sum of one hundred pound passed from hand to hand and no written receipts! The thought nearly gave him a fit! Certainly, Mr. Oswald had broad ideas on the subject of friendship!

But oh ! most unbusinesslike, and he rustled the numerous papers scattered upon the table, and mopped his brow, and altogether it was some time before he could collect himself sufficiently to explain how Aunt Matty and my business affairs were now to be arranged.

"By the terms of your father's will," he said, "you are now heiress to everything. You will have a very good income one of these days, but for the present I would counsel a little economy, and I should not advise you to be in a hurry to return to Craven Hill. The Drummonds are good tenants, and there are debts to be paid, which, though you may not be legally——"

"I should like *everything* paid," I broke in, "especially anything that is owed to Mr. Drummond. And we were talking about Craven Hill last night; Aunt Matty and I both want to leave Penhurst for a time—and go abroad; I should like to go at once—this week. And you may do anything you like about Craven Hill, Mr. Bennett—at least, please Aunt Matty first—and let us both get away *soon*."

Mr. Bennett gave me a half-disapproving, half-pitying smile, but before he could make any reply, there was a tap at the door, and Simpson appeared.

"If you please, Miss," she said, "Mr. Oswald Drummond is in the drawing-room, and wishes to see you."

I gave a little gasp. Oswald of all people ! How could I possibly see him ? I could never look either of the Drummonds in the face again.

I did not wonder *now* that Oswald had thought it necessary to break our engagement, and for the first time it was with shame I recalled the words I had spoken to him at Penhurst station.

"I am engaged," I said hastily. "Tell Aunt Matty—she will see him."

"Miss Powell is out," said Simpson, with disapproval writ large on her face, and in her voice. The Craven Hill gardener was more hospitably treated at "The Hollies" than his master. And then Mr. Bennett unexpectedly came to my assistance.

"I should like very much to see Mr. Drummond," he said, adding, "and I shall not detain him long."

Thus left alone, I crossed the room, threw open one of the windows, and seated myself on the broad, cushioned sill.

How still everything lay in the warm afternoon sunshine. The

occasional bleating of the sheep in the meadows, and the sound of the gardener's rake on the gravel pathway alone broke the silence. But, oh, I told myself the country was only for happy people—people with minds at rest! This stillness and tranquillity were maddening to me now, and I longed still more to leave it all behind.

Presently I heard voices and footsteps on the stairs. Mr. Bennett's talk had *not* been long.

Then I remembered that Oswald would pass this window! The syringa bush would effectively screen me from observation, and though I had just thrown away an opportunity of meeting him, yet I felt I must see him go down the avenue for the last time; it would give me a kind of morbid pleasure.

The dining-room door opened, but I did not turn my head. If Mr. Bennett thought I was going to talk any more business, he was mistaken. After I had seen Oswald pass, I was going to my room to commence packing my boxes. But he was a long time coming; and surely Mr. Bennett did not mean to stand close behind me and watch for him too!

I turned sharply round—it was not Mr. Bennett at all, but Oswald.

"As the mountain won't come to Mahomet, Mahomet must go to the mountain," he said. "Why do you refuse to see me, Dolly?"

"Oh—I—I've been—talking business with Mr. Bennett all the morning." They were the first words that came into my head, and I felt their foolishness as I uttered them, and listened to his reply.

"But I did not mean to talk 'business' with you. Dolly," he continued, seating himself beside me, "it is not long—as one counts days and weeks—since I asked you to be my wife, but events have made it seem like years. *Now*, however, we need wait no longer, why should we not be married soon?"

"Oh no!" I exclaimed, springing to my feet, but Oswald's arm prevented me leaving my place on the window-ledge.

"What is the matter?" he said quietly.

"How can you ask?" I retorted. "Do you think I do not *know* all that Ned did?—He stole your father's money. He—he was a thief—and he let *you* be called one——"

"Yes, and you said you would not mind being the wife of one; and when I had—wisely or unwisely, I can hardly say which—cut my—

self adrift from everyone, who was it stood by me, and offered me—herself? Oh, my love, because I did not *say* much that day, and went away and left you, don't think it was because I didn't value your sweet little words, and offers of help! And as for Ned, I don't think either you or I can judge him. I once owed him my life, and I feel as if, indirectly, I owe him my present happiness, and *that* covers all!"

* * * *

"How did you get rid of Mr. Bennett?" I asked after a short interval, during which I had been successfully brought round to Oswald's way of thinking.

"Oh, very easily, I merely told him that I had not a moment to spare, and must at once see *you* on urgent private business. Of course he understood and sent me down here. He's a very good fellow, Dorothy!"

Handwriting and Character as revealed thereby.

By RICHARD DIMSDALE STOCKER.

Author of "A CONCORDANCE OF GRAPHOLOGY AND PHYSIOGNOMY,"
"PRACTICAL GRAPHOLOGY," etc., etc.

ALTHOUGH, to some extent, one's handwriting may appear to be fettered and dominated by the spirit of conventionality, on account of the fact of certain special forms of strokes having to do duty for certain letters, we shall find, when we come to examine it, that it is, perhaps, a more adequate guide to character than we at first imagined it to be.

If we, for one moment, pause to consider what handwriting actually *is*, we shall understand better why it may claim to be considered an index to its writer's disposition, temperament, and personality generally. The dictionary explains the term "writing" as the act or art of forming letters and characters for the purpose of recording or communicating ideas.

Now, I take it, most of my readers will grant that the *external* is

but the reflection or "visible sign" of the *internal*; in fact, it may be said to be the spirit and mind *personified*.

If we accept this theory—and there is no reason whatever why we should not do so—else why should everything have a definite form? and we proceed to notice the various shapes of the objects in animate (and inanimate, too, for the matter of that) nature, we shall observe that all forms must be constructed after either (or both) a *curvilinear* (which includes the perispheric, or globe-shaped, arch, &c.,) or *linear* (which comprises the horizontal and vertical, together with, of course, the angular) pattern or principle.

Having ascertained that this is, in reality, so, we have only to apply these basic laws to the members of the human body,—to the face and features in particular.

Most of my readers will grant that they are the emblems of the disposition of the subject who possesses them, and there is, most will admit, a *perfect* correspondence in form and feeling, between mind and matter.

Therefore, is it singular that the characters which we employ to convey our *ideas* should have sprung from hieroglyphics, and, as we have advanced, taken more *definite* and definable forms?

In olden times, few but the learned could use the pen; but at the present day, none are so unlettered that they cannot do so, unless it be the idiotic.

Form has been acknowledged to reveal character; consequently we are justified in believing that the straight line and curve (to which it is practically, if analyzed, restricted) have their own inherent *meanings* and special significations. Such, indeed, has been proved to be the case.

As far as I am aware, however, no writer on graphology has attempted to elucidate the matter in connection with his science, and this it will be my duty to do. By referring to any documents or autographs, one can dissect these elements of form; this done, we naturally wish to discover what they imply, broadly speaking: their significations may be tabulated as follows:—

$$\text{Curvi-} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Including the semi-circular,} \\ \text{linear} \quad \text{or spherical elements.} \end{array} \right\} = \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Art, sentiment, emotion,} \\ \text{intuition, affection, imagi-} \\ \quad \text{nation, enthusiasm.} \end{array} \right.$$

N.B.—This of course, covers the oval, etc. These elements

favour a *feminine* type of mind, and either oratorical, dramatic or musical abilities.

Rectilinear $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Including the linear, angu-} \\ \text{lar, and rectangular, prin-} \\ \text{ciple.} \end{array} \right\} = \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Science, reason, intel-} \\ \text{lect, rectitude, stability,} \\ \text{order, conservatism.} \end{array} \right.$

N.B.—This, naturally, provides for the octagonal, &c. These elements induce a *masculine* cast of mind, philosophical and constructive tastes.

Any given specimen of handwriting may resemble *either* one or other of these basic types, or else it may *combine both* the two forms in its outline together. Of course, a *deficiency* of one argues, up to a certain point, a relative strength of the other—unless, as is sometimes the case, the law of *perversion* (which causes the handwriting to lose definiteness and “character,” by rendering the strokes either oblique, eccentric in form, or imperfect in their curvature) supervenes.

Now, the *curve* is produced, chiefly—when present,—in the formation of the “turn-strokes” (those which directly precede the up and down strokes); while the *line* is represented, principally, in the up and down strokes themselves; as well as in the horizontal bar which crosses the “t,” and also, in any lines drawn, or dashes, etc.

The law of *obliquity* is exemplified in *irregularity* of alignment, crookedness of the strokes, and so on.

[This is, of course, an abnormal type, and signifies either immorality, defective mentality, one-sidedness, non-stability, or else *marked* individuality, as the case may be.]

Taking the writing in the abstract, we may mention that certain special graphological signs have been discovered, the characteristics indicated by which are judged of according to the *development* of the various characters—figures, signs, letters, &c.

In this place, within the limits of a short magazine article, no detailed description can, of course, be entered into concerning all the faculties which have been localized; but such graphic symbols as are the most highly characteristic shall be touched upon.

As undevelopment, crudity, and immaturity characterize the mind of the infant, so the series of pen strokes which the average child—or child-like nature—produces,—evidences the unformed condition of the intellect.

“Text,” or round-hand, when the writer has no other style, invari-

ably indicates an unformed condition of mind and conventionality of ideas, or arrested development.

On the contrary, therefore, original handwriting will be found to be the off-shoot of talented persons, or those of genius; sometimes, however, when absurdly grotesque, it may pertain to a maniac. The handwriting of the insane, by the way, has received a good deal of attention, by graphological experts, of late.

Large handwriting denotes unlimited ideas, great schemes, and the love of taking things *en masse*. Very often it betokens the love of effect.

Small handwriting indicates limited notions—attention to detail, love of finish, and the inclination to look at the *minutiae*, rather than the *whole* of things.

Observation is indicated by angular, pointed writing; orderliness, by a careful, precise hand.

When the reflective or reasoning faculties are well defined, the writer will be inclined to place his or her letters singly—that is, they will, at intervals, at all events, be unconnected.

When the *letters and words* are constantly attached to one another, it denotes fluency of speech.

As may be expected, loving people write a looped, rounded and sloping hand (one which will lean to the right).

Energetic, forcible and ambitious characters pen a more or less forceful, go-a-head, rigid style.

Will-power is indicated, more particularly, according to the manner in which the final strokes terminate. In order to show strong powers of determination, they should finish either in a blunt, square-shaped manner, or else in a hook-like fashion.

This applies especially to the cross-bar of the “t.” When this letter is left uncrossed, it shows a want of resolution.

Musical tastes may be inferred from a softly rounded style; artistic feeling and poetic instincts from harmonious, sweeping and elegant strokes of which the letters are formed.

Honourable conscientious people write a straightforward, consistent hand; untruthful, subtle persons, the reverse. Deceitful, dissimulating people run their handwriting into mere lines—into thread-like strokes: they close up their letters tightly, too, in their endeavours even to *conceal and hide their motives* when writing.

Hopeful people indite an ascendant, free and buoyant hand;

miserable persons the opposite. Generous individuals write with extended finals. Miserly folks cramp and pinch their writing.

In conclusion, although I advance the theory that the rectangular and rectilinear-formed individual will write a straight or angular hand, and a curvilinear, tapering-limbed person, a round or curved style, which will indicate their characteristics *because partaking of their form*, I only state that such will prove the case when the *natural, un-studied, spontaneous* writing is adopted. No artificial or consciously (or even unconsciously) *copied* writing is a fair example, it being but a *mere drawing*.

Experience will teach that the usual handwriting is an *unerring* guide to the grade of mentality and disposition.—*Facts are stubborn things*.

Damocles, or the Gates of Janus.

By THEODORA CORRIE.

Author of "IN SCORN OF CONSEQUENCE," "PETRONELLA DARCY,"
"ONLY THE AYAH," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XIV. (*continued.*)

"TED is much stronger this year," the duchess said; "he is more like his old self."

"Yes, he has made a wonderful recovery," said John, but there was a shade of constraint in his voice, and she noticed it.

"I had hoped to take Henrietta to town with me this spring, and to present her myself," she said with seeming irrelevance, "but it has been quite impossible. Perhaps it is just as well. There is plenty of time where the rising generation is concerned, and happiness comes faster if one doesn't look for it. John, don't let your pride darken that child's future."

He smiled, and shrugged his shoulders, much as Pegasus in pound might have given himself a shake, supposing that he had been in captivity for a long time with wings carefully clipped, and no immediate prospect of escape.

"I am not Henrietta's father or her guardian," he said. "Her future depends upon her mother's wishes to a great extent."

"May has had all she will ever get from me," said his aunt: "but Henrietta is a different person, and my own god-daughter. Whatever happens, your pride need not be hurt, John. If Solway is ready to start perhaps he will drive home with me. He doesn't tire one with talking."

But the Duchess was mistaken for once in her life. The carriage had not gone far on its homeward way before her step-son showed a decided inclination for conversation.

"I wonder what you have been discussing with John," he said. "I have an idea that Laura has been at her old tricks again. It is easy to see where most of the money has gone of late years. That woman would beggar the Great Mogul if she had the chance. John has been telling me that he must find a tenant for Godwin's Rest this autumn—that he means to turn out. He might just as well come yachting with me for nine months out of the twelve, but he is so desperately independent."

"Have you been trying to help him?"

Sol bit his lip. "He won't be helped. He talks of going abroad again."

"I wonder how the Nutshell would suit him as a *piéd-à-terre*," she said meditatively.

"The Nutshell for John? Its altogether too small: you must be joking, mother: besides it's occupied."

"Yes, for the present: but Drusilla has been telling me this afternoon that Cleveland urges her to take Lavender for a long sea voyage. Joe Swann, the brother who emigrated, has made money lately, and has settled in Melbourne: and he wants his sisters to come out to him. Cleveland as good as told me the other day that a voyage is the only thing that might possibly save Lavender's life. If they go away they will want a careful tenant for the Nutshell. It is a nice little house: more fit perhaps for a man's establishment than for a double family: eminently suitable for a bachelor."

"I am glad that you think so," he said shortly.

"I didn't say that I thought so, Solway. I was only picturing the probable reflections of someone else. To a lady, for instance, who had lived at the Chase, or at Godwin's Rest, the very thought of such a humiliating change of residence might prove insufferable: indeed I can well believe that very refined susceptibilities might be driven back to a charming house abroad, only waiting to be occupied, and to a climate where hot water pipes were not a necessity."

A sudden flash of comprehension came into his eyes, but she went on talking, in the same reflective voice with its little touch of quiet irony: "If the second person went away, the move would have accomplished all that one could desire, and matters might be placed on a more satisfactory footing."

"No: trust her to come back," he said.

"Not if she had sufficient inducement to stay away." She studied his disturbed face with a more kindly expression on her own than usual, then said: "You mean well, Solway, but I have been hoping for this crash for several reasons. Sampson's fall did a good deal of damage to his keepers as well as to himself: the destruction of the house wouldn't be amiss here either, and the damage where John is concerned need only be temporary. You needn't be afraid that he will have too much of the Nutshell if he goes there. I am ill enough, but I mean to see the last of Laura: and I can see my way to the end of this tangle too, even if you don't. For one thing May will be disposed of in a day or two."

"I shall miss May," he said. "A little of her exhilarates one like light champagne, though too much might give one a headache. Possibly she is just as well out of the way: she is a young person who has ideas of her own. But if you are counting on Henrietta's banishment, mother, as well as upon Laura's, I have a shrewd suspicion that one or two people may raise objections. I can quite understand that too much of Henrietta might be dangerous. She might even make a lazy person like myself energetic," he ended in his sleepiest voice.

"The age of miracles is past and Ted doesn't seem afraid of seeing too much of Hetty," she said dryly. Then she leant wearily back against her cushions and closed her eyes, with the air of a person who has finished with a subject: and Sol, quick to follow her example, tilted his hat to a comfortable angle, and accomplished the rest of the drive in silence.

It was a good augury for John's future happiness, he thought, that Catherine Harebrooke had made up her mind to see the last of Laura Godwin. The face at his side looked sadly worn, but the lines of the firm mouth betrayed no sign of weakness: and he knew by long experience that the difficulties which wear out a feeble nature only act as stimulants upon a stronger one. His father had always maintained that the Duchess was a born diplomat, and one

of the few women who could wait patiently for what they wanted till the right moment came for action. Where Ted was concerned Sol fancied that she might have cherished more ambitious views: but Ted inherited his father's smile, and his father's voice, and his wishes, like the laws of the Medes and Persians were never called in question with a view to alteration. More than this, Sol perceived that the Duchess, who set her own value upon most people, and cared not a straw for outside opinion, seemed greatly attracted by Henrietta. Let carping critics say what they will, supreme loveliness is a rare talisman. Even Solway himself, who, in olden days, used never to bestow more than a passing thought upon either of his so-called cousins, had more than once lately felt his pulses strangely quickened by the mere fact of Henrietta's presence. Unless Ted made the most of his opportunities it was possible that some more determined suitor might even yet cut him out.

But at Godwin's Rest on this particular evening no one could have lawfully accused Ted of wasting his opportunities, while in May he had found an unexpected ally. To do the girl justice, from her own point of view she had her sister's interest at heart: on the understanding that they did not clash with her own. On the eve of her marriage she felt in an amiable frame of mind, and inclined to settle finally the affairs of the small world which she was about to quit.

On entering the little fir wood at the back of Godwin's Rest she therefore came to a halt, and complained of a stone in her shoe. A stone meant Patrick's undivided assistance for several minutes, and the use of his fingers to untie the shoe lace, drawn for some unaccountable reason into an obstinate knot. An interested on-looker might have detected a gleam of satisfied mischief in one pair of eyes, when the stone, an imaginary one, had been satisfactorily dismissed, the shoe replaced, laced and tied to her small ladyship's satisfaction. This easy task accomplished, Patrick, only too pleased to get his lady love to himself for once, sat down on a bench under a friendly tree, and bewailed the coming supper in no measured terms. The pair of people in front were nearly out of sight by this time, strolling through the fir wood on their way to the orchard: Ted all the time rallying Henrietta on her shameful lack of sympathy over the defeat of the "Chasites" and Evelyn's disappointment.

"I am very sorry for you, and for cousin Evelyn," she said with dancing eyes.

"It looks like it," he said, "now May's sympathy has taken a more sensible turn ; she came over to our side days ago."

"May is a base deserter, Ted, her only excuse is that she had the best of all possible reasons to give. Now I haven't any strong inducement to incline me to change my colours."

She spoke in jest, but he looked at her for once without any answering smile, and with so curiously wistful an expression on his face that it struck her with a sense of pain and perplexity. "One expects impossibilities sometimes," he said. "Perhaps one is too apt to deceive oneself into temporary forgetfulness."

"You shouldn't talk of impossibilities, Ted. Cousin Evelyn always says that you get what you want more quickly than anyone else."

"Yes," he said, "but for those who are out of the race there are sometimes too many consolation prizes. To get one's own way too easily, often serves as a reminder that one is crippled. Why, Hetty, what's the matter ? You mustn't let me worry you with my fancies," for her eyes were full of tears.

"It's not true ; I can't bear to hear you say such things."

"What is not true ? "

She flushed. "You know that you have grown out of all that : no one would notice it."

"You may say so," he said quietly, "but I shall always walk a little lame when I am tired. I shall never be quite like other people again, so far as strength goes."

"Do you think that could alter you to anyone who cared for you ? "

"Are you so sure of that ? Are you sure for yourself, Hetty ? "

Henrietta was profoundly moved : there was an inexplicable look of dread in his eyes, they seemed to fear her answer : a haunting sound of grief never before heard in his voice : as if the insouciance that had always been a part of his nature, was nevertheless deep rooted in that silent pain which underlies the surface of all heroism, and blossoms into the fairest growths of life on the surface. At that moment Henrietta read his heart truly. Drawing close to him she said : "Sure ? Why I never noticed it, and if I did it could only make me care for you more than ever. Don't you know that by

this time, Ted?" In her eager sympathy she laid one hand on his arm, looking straight up into his face, and as she looked, her glance was arrested and held fast. There came over his whole bearing a change, a sudden intensity of gladness. Drawing a long breath as if released from an intolerable burden, he caught her hand in both his own. "Hetty," he said, "Hetty have I won you over to my side after all, without your finding me out?"

But Henrietta did not answer him, only stood trembling while the colour swept into her face. Then with a sudden unexpected movement she drew her hand away from his with the swiftness of a startled fawn, darted through the door in the wall, into the garden beyond, and disappeared from sight. So great was her haste that in another minute she would have reached the safe shelter of the house had not Godwin met her in full career.

"Whither away so fast?" he said, putting out his arm, and arresting the light flying figure. "I was just coming to look for you. What a child you are still to be running races all by yourself."

Brought to a standstill in the narrow pathway, she answered him with a mingling of humour and pathos in her voice, which he was quick to notice, "I am not a child any longer, Uncle John. Please try to remember that."

"Well then," he said, gently, "come with me, and give me the benefit of your advice. I want you to take a look at the flowers on the supper table. I am quite sure that Jeremiah hasn't put the decorations as you meant them to be."

Unable to escape, she slipped her hand through his arm, and took her way to the coach-house. Ted soon joined her there, giving advice and assistance with his usual imperturbability. The few remarks that he made to her were ordinary enough, but still startled and moved she could not keep a tinge of consciousness from her face—could not quite ignore the look in the eyes that were watching her. Keeping close to her uncle's side till the flowers were set straight, and then slipping away to the safe shelter of her own room, she felt all the while, that play at hide and seek as she would, the time was fast coming when Ted would find her.

CHAPTER XV.

ON the following afternoon, Henrietta came into May's bedroom, to find her lying down in a white dressing-gown, half way through the third volume of a novel. With her long, fair hair undone, thrown carelessly over the back of the pillow, with the white wrapper slipping back, showing a glimpse of rounded dimpled arms; with one hand under her cheek, and a certain lazy grace in her whole attitude, May looked the picture of ease. Henrietta coming up, stooped and kissed her wistfully, and May returned the caress smiling, yet a trifle preoccupied. At the moment, "her world lay spread in the leaves of her book," she had quite forgotten that this was the last day before her own wedding. The story was of an exciting kind, the plot approaching a crisis of interest. Wrapped up in the imaginary woes and perils of the heroine, she could give but a small portion of her mind to other, and more mundane, matters. Henrietta's remark that the Miss Swanns would be expecting them, and that it was quitetime to be off, brought an expression of genuine impatience to the pretty face on the pillow. "Oh dear, Henrietta, I had forgotten all about them. I really don't think I can manage it. It is such a hot afternoon, and I am quite tired out. I don't feel that I can face a walk."

"The road is all in the shade, and it isn't any distance," said Henrietta coaxingly; "and they will be so dreadfully disappointed. Miss Swann will have made a cake on purpose: you will come, won't you?"

"I shall have to get into my print dress again, Hetty. I meant to dress for dinner next; and it's just possible that Patrick may catch that earlier train from town; it would be so unkind if he found me out. Come and lie down here, and let's be comfortable. We can send a note to the Nutshell, and Miss Swann will understand—at least, she ought to if she doesn't—that a hundred and one things are apt to turn up at a time like this to prevent our coming. My writing-case is there; just give it to me." But Henrietta did not comply with this request.

"You don't know how they have set their hearts upon seeing us," she said gently. "I will go by myself if need be."

"But I don't want you to go, I want you here, and a note will do

just as well," said May. She did not like to be crossed, even in small matters, or to be made to feel selfish. If she elected to stay at home, Henrietta must not be allowed to fill the other half of a tiresome duty. But, meeting with unexpected opposition after a few minutes talk, the thought of the novel obtruded itself. If Henrietta stayed at home, what chance would there be of finishing that third volume. The two conflicting ideas trembled in the balance; then she said, stifling a yawn and a slight sense of shame together, "Well, go if you must, and say everything that is proper for me; but I think you are much too good to those two dear old bores."

"They don't bore me, May, and besides, I thought that it would be the last walk we should have together." Henrietta could not quite keep the disappointment out of her voice, and, oddly enough, this little personal speech took effect where all other pleading had failed. If May could ever be capable of self-denial, it would be for the sake of her sister. She admired unselfishness very much in other people, and indeed, everything good in the abstract; but to apply these same principles to herself seldom occurred to her. On this occasion she departed suddenly from her usual line of conduct. Not altogether willingly or graciously, perhaps, she tossed the novel to the bottom of the bed, and bringing her reluctant feet to the floor, remarked, "Well, you little torment, I will come if I must—if you have really set your heart upon it; but I think I am very good." In this mood she proceeded to dress, and to walk the little piece of shady road that led to the Nutshell. The smaller festivities of Godwin's Worthy would never afford her any real pleasure. This had been the case from the first evening of her return from abroad, when she had declared that life at home would bore her beyond bearing. It had bored her in the old childish days, when life to the one sister had been perfect, while the other fretted to go to school. True, Henrietta now longed for more liberty—for a wider range of interests; but apart from her own people, it seemed to her that she could not be happy. If she made new ties, it would only be to share them with older ones; while May felt merely greedy for personal happiness. Without realising this difference, Henrietta had felt saddened during the whirl of the last few weeks. Life is made up of trifles, and the whole sum of happiness often hangs on a smile, a look, one word of mutual sympathy, or the lack of it; and to-day it might be a small matter that May did not care to say good-bye to

the Miss Swanns ; but straws show the direction of the current, and her evident boredom cast a shadow over the whole expedition.

By the time the two sisters reached the cottage, Henrietta's spirits were at a low ebb, though they revived perforce at the first sight of Miss Swann's beaming face. It had gone five o'clock, and tea was quite ready—tea that could be equalled at no other house in the county—so Miss Swann had remarked to herself while inspecting the kitchen kettle only a few minutes before, to make sure that the water boiled. The beautiful old china, the tiny home-made rolls, the thick cream, the strawberries in the dragon china bowl, the fruit knives with their green ivory carved handles, the centre epergne of old silver, with pierced hanging baskets, filled with the choicest flowers from the small garden. Henrietta noted everything; and knew that on no ordinary occasion did any of these treasures see the light. She guessed, though May did not, that every bit of the best tea service had been carried from the store cupboard upstairs, and would by-and-by be washed up by Miss Swann's own hands. And the spindle-legged table in the corner, with the napkin thrown over it, suggested some pleasant secret, judging by the many glances sent in that particular direction.

Inwardly lamenting May's lack of appetite, and of interest, Henrietta gallantly threw herself into the breach. Like Froissart, at an ever-memorable banquet, of all the delicacies there provided, she, "the humble chronicler, did partake," and if she ate but a pretence of dinner later on, no one from the Nutshell would be any the wiser.

Miss Swann said afterwards that it was worth any amount of time and trouble to see how that dear child had enjoyed herself. May's slightly abstracted manner was put down to a very proper and natural preoccupation on the eve of such an important event as matrimony; and her lamentably small appetite for anything but fruit, kindly ascribed to the same cause. Of course it was a pity, but Miss Swann believed that people in love never did eat more than enough to satisfy a sparrow. Altogether the two little ladies felt that their party was a success. The event of the evening lay, of course, in the uncovering of the spindle-legged table. Miss Swann cleared her throat as she raised the napkin, and discovered underneath it a beautiful old box of French inlaid straw-work, given, she explained, many years ago, to her own mother, by a family friend,

who had held a post for a time in the household of His Majesty George the Fourth of blessed memory, and who, while there, had received the box as a gift from Prince William, who had himself taken it in the first instance from a captured French ship, when he was a middy. The box alone was a curiosity; and when Miss Swann proceeded to raise the lid, and disclosed a piece of exquisite old lace, May's delighted thanks were sincere and spontaneous.

The rest of her visit went off easily, and she had the grace to remark, walking home, that it was very kind of the Miss Swanns to give her anything. "They are dear old things after all," she said; "and now I come to think of it, that piece of point will be the very thing to go on my velvet dress; and, as Patrick hasn't come, I can finish my book before dinner."

Like many other people, May felt genuine interest in her own concerns, but she had no knack of standing, even in imagination, beyond her own shadow. And while the two girls were walking home, Miss Lavender pulled open a drawer in a cedar-wood desk, and touched with gentle fingers, a bundle of faded, rose-scented letters; living over again, in the dusk, the romance of her youth, with a tender thought at her heart for the young bride of to-morrow.

Possibly the most placid sleeper at Godwin's Rest that night, was May herself; and when she opened her eyes on the following morning, the golden sunbeams filtering through the venetian blinds, filled up the measure of her satisfaction. Proceeding with a leisurely dressing, aided by Sophie, she put on a white wrapper, and discussed the breakfast brought to her by Henrietta, with a comfortable conviction that the world was a very good place to live in. At the time of which I am writing, weddings were not put off till the afternoon; and though the old grandfather's clock on the staircase had not long struck nine, a pleasant stir seemed already to be going on in the house. M. de Brie had come over to breakfast by special invitation: indeed, during the last few weeks, he had become quite a tame cat about the house, and fifty times more efficacious than a salts bottle whenever one of Mrs. Goodwin's bad headaches threatened to become overpowering. To-day he brought with him a great box of orange blossoms, specially ordered beforehand from the Villa Salviani. May did not know that the first spray of the flowers went to her mother, made up by the Count himself, and the second to Henrietta, before the lion's share of the bouquet was sent up to her

room. As Mrs. Godwin said, the flowers were a most poetical offering, and it was just like dear Armand to remember her fondness for orange blossom, before even considering the bride. Dressed in an ideal gown of grey and silver brocade, she looked wonderfully handsome this morning. Her tall, Juno-like figure, and beautiful brown eyes, had paid small tribute to the passing years, though her mood to-day bordered on deep discontent, and a fretful expression crossed her face more than once. In her own estimation, the wedding would go off with a sad lack of *éclat*. Certainly it would be a less costly affair for John's pocket than he fancied that it might be, May having absolutely declined to ask a lot of people, or to have a sit-down breakfast.

"Unless we could do it properly, mamma," she said, "it would be absurd to give a big party or to attempt a big breakfast; and you know we can't afford it. I abominate speeches, and so does uncle John; besides, Patrick and I have made up our minds to catch that comfortable, fast, two o'clock train, instead of going by a crawler. We can take a luncheon basket with us if need be, and it will save a lot of fuss."

As usual, the weaker will went down before the stronger one, and May had her own way; but it was a very disappointing decision, and Mrs. Godwin, seated in an armchair in the breakfast-room, sighed heavily, as she gave a few final directions to her brother-in-law; and then went upstairs to see the bride dressed, with the air of a person who has accomplished a long day's work, and set an example to all early risers.

Two hours later the old clerk gave it as his opinion that Miss Godwin's was the prettiest wedding that had been seen in Godwin's Worthy for years: perhaps he was right. May certainly made a very striking looking bride. She had a style of her own which seemed to lend animation to all her surroundings. Her dress suited her admirably, and her personal emotion at the idea of leaving home was not sufficiently deep to bring about any of that tightness of heart provocative of unbecoming tears. She felt some real regret—as much as was in her—at parting with her sister; but an inward sense of intense contentment overpowered this tiny cloud in the sky. Her realisation of the vows taken, and the solemnity of the service, might best have been summed up by the determination to be a good wife to Patrick; coupled with the placid conviction

that he was desperately in love, and would make just the right sort of husband. Too well bred to betray her satisfaction openly, this sense of well being and inward security, lent an unusual tranquillity to her demeanour during the service, and rendered her an object of general admiration. Mrs. Godwin, in a bonnet of becoming velvet pansies and Brussels lace looked a very fine lady indeed, so the villagers agreed; though far too languidly elegant to satisfy the rustic mind. Mrs. Strafford, fair, pleasant, rosy faced, and inclined to embonpoint, openly wiping away a tear or two as the service proceeded, won various approving glances. She sat in the front pew with Margaret, and was strikingly dressed in one of Worth's latest creations. Henrietta's voice led the school children in the hymn; the one little falter in the opening verse passing unnoticed by most people. It was all over at last. The cutting of the wedding cake, the simple breakfast, and the changing of the bride's dress. Soon after one o'clock May drove off with her husband in a shower of rice, and in really nice time, as she said, to catch the two o'clock train.

Mrs. Godwin received all congratulations with her usual graciousness. She had never betrayed to the outside world the bitter disappointment given to her hopes by her daughter's behaviour. Moreover her feelings by this time were beginning to be a little intricate. The kaleidoscope of her mind rudely shaken, some weeks ago, had already assumed a distinctly fresh shape. Till lately she had never troubled herself much about Henrietta's future destiny; but now contrasting one daughter's undutifulness with the others pliability, and foiled where she once fondly hoped for success, she had already reared a very pretty new castle on the ruins of the old one.

Henrietta always obedient and affectionate would, she flattered herself, be as wax in her hands. All the more that every now and then struck by an unwonted softness in her mother's manner, the girl gave love back fourfold; her own hopes so often checked expanding in shy tentative caresses, much as a plant might put out a tendril here and there, in response to some unexpected gleam of sunshine.

Mrs. Godwin's own opinion, depending chiefly on a general verdict, had been struck to-day into^d surprised admiration, admiration bordering upon astonishment. She had been forced to see that the bridesmaid had attracted far more attention than the bride.

But when once the last guest had driven away, Henrietta disappeared for the rest of the afternoon, while her mother went upstairs to take a much needed siesta. Unfortunately her reflections were more complicated than usual, and threatened to banish sleep.

She could not disguise the fact that the Count's attentions were becoming very marked. It flattered her self love agreeably to feel that she could marry again if she chose to do so. Of course it was a little hard upon poor Armand, but she had never given him any real encouragement, and his frequent calls served as unexpected *sauce piquante* to her everyday dish of existence. She hated the English climate and loved Italian sunshine; but with the large fortune that would probably come to John before many months were over, she reflected that it would be sheer idiocy to become a comparatively poor Countess. Meanwhile, as children play at snap-dragon at festival times, she enjoyed her cousin's constant visits; quite convinced that, whatever other people might do in similar circumstances, Laura Godwin would never burn her fingers. The prospect of enlarging Godwin's Rest, of adding to the stables, and building a range of orchid houses to surpass those at the Grange; of being better dressed than anyone else, while preserving semi-invalid habits; and posing in fact as a sort of grandee for the admiration of all comers, flattered her ambition and tended to overbalance the scale against the Count at the outset. Yet in Armand's company no one could be dull, and his flowing Italian came as a positive relief after the English of her other visitors, while in her secret heart his reminiscences stirred the old longing for Italian skies, and for the sunny, *dolce far niente* careless life. If the matter had been one of careful calculation Armand de Brie could not have appeared upon the scene at a more opportune moment. May's cool behaviour and little sarcastic speeches, had hurt and wounded Mrs. Godwin desperately; and had left a soreness, a blank in her heart which she seldom forgot except when the Count made his appearance. She disliked her brother-in-law, declaring him to be a person devoid of sympathy. Any serious conversation that took place between the two generally arose on the subject of unpaid bills, and such intercourse is apt to become of a strained character. Unfortunately for herself she failed to realise that John's endurance had been taxed to its utmost limit this year, and that she was standing at the moment on the brink of a volcano.

She cared nothing about getting into debt; while John, strictly honourable and almost hyper-sensitive where money matters were concerned, could never be induced to live beyond his income on the score of his prospective inheritance. Yet it was patent to everyone that the Duchess was failing fast. Since the day of the cricket match she had been unable to take her usual drive, and had declined coming to the wedding on the score of ill health, an unusual admission. Only this afternoon she had sent for John on a matter of business; and Mrs. Godwin said again to herself, when the summons came, that it was senseless to trouble about paltry economies when her brother-in-law's income would soon be an enormous one.

It may be remembered that John's grandmother, old Mrs. Godwin, only daughter and heiress of a very wealthy man; had left all her enormous fortune, not to her own son, whose reckless life had been a sore grief to her, but to her childless daughter, the Duchess of Harebrook for life only, and had devised the money to go afterwards to John Godwin in entirety.

If anyone had accused Laura Godwin of looking forward to her aunt's demise, she would have felt genuinely shocked. She often expressed regret for poor Aunt Catherine's weak health; but surely to build private castles in the air could hurt no one; and this afternoon carriages, horses, and orchid houses rose pleasingly before her mind's eye, coupled with Solway's ill health, and refusal to marry, and Ted's future prospects. She was mentally inditing a note to the next Duchess of Harebrook, when the sound of a clock striking, and Sophie's entrance with a cup of chocolate disturbed her day dream, and recalled to mind Henrietta's prolonged absence.

CHAPTER XVI.

Tea once over, for the first time in her life, Mrs. Godwin left her sofa in search of her daughter. Evelyn had fixed the first concert rehearsal for this evening, and had promised on her way to call for Henrietta. Mr. Prosser could never be persuaded to lend the school-room for the practices, so they were always held in an old riding hall attached to the Grange. Margaret had enlisted Henrietta's

help beforehand, and the girl had promised to take part in a trio, and play an accompaniment for Ted. But all thought of the concert seemed to have faded from her mind when Mrs. Godwin found her, curled up in the bedroom window-seat, deep in a leather-covered, musty-looking book.

Had May been going out, the whole household would have been aware of the fact, but Henrietta generally picked her own flowers, and the actual twisting of her pretty hair seldom took more than ten minutes. This evening she had apparently forgotten time and clothes alike.

Mrs. Godwin advanced with a sigh, the personal superintendence of her daughter's toilette was a new departure, not altogether satisfactory in kind. "My dear," she said, "I began to think you were lost; you must not forget that you are dining out to-night."

Henrietta started, looked up, and sprang to her feet. "Oh, mamma, I forgot the time. It isn't late, is it?"

"No," said Mrs. Godwin, "but I have had my chocolate, and I am very tired. I thought I would just see what you were going to wear, as I wish to take a rest before dinner. Evelyn said that she would come early with the carriage, so you may as well get ready in good time. What can you have found to read in that old book, I wonder?"

"It is an old play that Ted lent me, mamma; rather a rare book. He picked it up last year on an old stall in Paris."

"I am not sure that I approve of Ted lending you books, Henrietta. I believe French authors are seldom to be trusted." Mrs. Godwin shook her head, but smiled indulgently. She was no linguist, her knowledge of French so scanty that she could never read a book for her own amusement.

"But there is no harm in this story, and it is written in English," said Henrietta, looking at her mother with shy, pleased eyes. "It is a splendid play, called 'Alcirat.' I do love tragedies."

"On paper, perhaps," said Mrs. Godwin, smiling.

"Mamma you are too bad; please listen to this. It's the last scene of all. Marian, the heroine, is seated on a sofa; an attendant is standing by. Enter the Countess Isabella (her mother, and a horrid woman). Do just listen, mamma, there is plenty of time;" and Henrietta read:

"Child, what is this? They tell me you are sick."

Marian, wildly : " Have pity, pity ; bid Earl Philip wait.

Why did you tell me of Count Hubert's love too late ?

Attendant : " Madam, she raves ; her thoughts go all astray."

Marian, in a low voice : " Philip is my betrothed, though I shall never be his wife :

And Hubert is my lover ; never mine.

And if I dared to love him, where's the good ?

I did not guess his secret till too late. Alas !

You read the riddle for me, when you said

Such love would be a sin——"

Countess : " Yes ; sin—a moral sin,"

Marian : " He would not sin, nor I : you do not know us.

Since he has sworn a vow, I, too, would swear—

That's plain and simple, surely. I, too, would live

Unwedded if I dared. I would be faithful

To him if I dared ; as he will be to me, until——" (Pauses)

Countess : " Till when ? "

Marian : " Until I die, I can be still in heaven,

The other side of death, of weariness.

'Tis easy waiting—easier, by far, than here.

And then, some day, he would come after me,

And find me safe. There are no marriages

In heaven. We shall be as the angels then.

I read that once : I think it's in the bible."

Countess : " The bible is no book for a good Catholic,

Nor meet for private study. Talk not to me

Of bibles, or of death, or Hubert either.

Think of your honour, girl."

Marian : " Honour ! That's a sad word—

The saddest in the language, since it keeps

Hubert from me—my Hubert. Mine, did I say ?

Ah, no ! He is not mine. What ring is this

Sparkling upon my finger ? 'Tis the Earl's.

It holds my honour fast—a tiny circle,

Fashioned to cut my heart. It always was too small.

It presses me—close clinging like a fetter.

O, mother, take it off. Call Hubert back.

Not Philip, not the Earl."

Countess : " Alas, it is too late

For talk of Hubert. The priest is come. We only
Lack the bride. Earl Philip waits."

Marian: "The Earl may wait."

Countess: "Child, are you sick, or mad, or both? The hour grows
late—too late."

Marian: "Yes, madam, you are right. It is too late." (Rises.)

"Too late, too late for marriage, but none too soon for
death." (Falls).

As Henrietta finished reading, Mrs. Godwin gave a little shriek.
"There, there, my dear, that will do. I thought you really were
going to fall. You quite startled me. You might have made your
hair rough, and you have done it very prettily." With some diffi-
culty Henrietta came back to realities—to her every-day frame of
mind. "I am very sorry that I startled you, but what do you think
of it, mamma?" she asked.

"Think?" said Mrs. Godwin, moving to the dressing-table and
straightening a brush, "I think with the Countess that it is getting
much too late, and that I shan't have half time enough to rest. It
struck six before I came to you. What are you going to wear?"

Henrietta suppressed a sigh; she had yet to learn that sympathy
was almost a missing quality in her mother's nature.

"I am quite ready, mamma," she said. "When once I begin to
read, I forget everything, so I dressed first." Mrs. Godwin looked
at her in surprise. Even the most critical observer could scarcely
have found fault, but she did. "But you are only in your tea-gown
my dear. What can you be thinking about?"

"Cousin Evelyn advised me to wear it, mamma. She always
puts on a tea-gown at these practices, for the sake of the farmers'
daughters. They come after dinner, and they only wear their best
Sunday gowns; and if we were in our dinner dresses it might make
them feel uncomfortable. You see we are all performers for the
time being."

Mrs. Godwin's face might have offered a study for a physiogno-
mist. At any time it made her impatient to hear Evelyn quoted,
but doubly impatient at this particular juncture, when Henrietta
ought to be looking her best. "Of course the farmers' daughters
must expect to feel different," she said. "An affair of this kind
should not be so mixed. If Evelyn likes to give a concert to the
villagers, well and good: the people could come and listen. But to

drag the lower classes into it all, and to make yourselves uncomfortable for the sake of some milk-maid who must not have her best dress eclipsed, I must say that it is a reversal of everything that would have been considered correct in my young days. But I suppose this is only another of these radical modern notions."

"Oh, but we shan't be uncomfortable, *Madre*, I am very fond of my tea-gown. It is a comparatively new luxury, and you must say that I look nice in it, or I shan't feel a bit happy. Why," she went on half merrily, but with an underlying air of pretty tenderness, "Ted said, the other day, that he admired my 'half-way' kind of gown more than any dress he had seen this year, because it made him think of chestnut blossoms and spring. I told him that men didn't know anything about women's clothes, or how to describe them, and he——"

Here Henrietta paused suddenly. She had made this little speech merely wishing to chase away the ominous pucker from her mother's brow; but now, something in the elder face brought an answering consciousness into the younger one. Leaving her sentence unfinished, the girl turned away, and began straightening the lace at her throat with rather unsteady fingers; while, in a voice altered from the querulous to the benign, Mrs. Godwin remarked that Ted was generally right in his ideas, and that certainly there was no time left to make any change of costume.

Viewed from the standpoint of Ted's admiration, the disputed garment became correct at once. Amidst the luxury of pretty clothes in May's trousseau, this particular dress had been presented to Henrietta as an afterthought. It represented one of Liberty's happiest ideas, being made in a shade of ivory crape, with a soft inner front of silk, shot through with the palest green. And from the curved Medici collar with its inner line of mechlin lace, the girl's fair, almost child-like, throat rose this evening like a flower from its sheath.

Dressed and ready, she yet seemed inclined to linger.

"You will be sure to come to see me when you get back, my dear," said her mother.

"Yes, mamma. I am afraid that I may be late, but I will come," said Henrietta, gathering up her cloak and hood. She half turned away, then stood for a moment hesitating, regarding the tall, languid figure by the dressing-table with wistful eyes.

